Five Founding Classics of Daoism

Laozi, Heshang Gong, Zhuangzi, Liezi, Huainanzi, Wenzi

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The Scripture on the Dao and Virtue (*Dào Dé Jīng*) by Lǎozi (Old Master), with the Commentary by Heshang Gong — Translated and edited by Dan G. Reid

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THE HESHANG GONG COMMENTARY

ON LAO ZI'S DAO DE JING

TRANSLATED BY
DAN G. REID

"Dan has really put a great tool into a lot of people's hands. Heshang Gong has been living in a cave as far as anyone interested in Laozi has been concerned. Now he's out. And the introduction as well as the textual aids for the non-Chinese reading reader at the back really make this a major contribution to the field, especially to those readers leery of the scholarly gauntlet."

- Red Pine (Bill Porter), translator of *Lao-Tzu's Taoteching: with Selected Commentaries of the Past 2000 Years*

“Reid has translated the beguiling verse of this ancient text within the framework of the 2,000-year-old Ho-Shang Kung Commentary, an obscure but authentic commentary that clarifies many points which have baffled both Chinese scholars and Western translators.

Translating the original words of the Tao Teh Ching line by line, he follows each line with his translation of the matching commentary from Ho-Shang Kung ("The Riverside Sage"). This format provides the reader with new perspectives on this multi-faceted classic, with The Riverside Sage serving as the reader's knowing guide.

Like the great English translator Arthur Waley, Dan G. Reid taught himself how to read classical Chinese, so he brings his own viewpoint to his work, not the views of a particular "school of thought" in Sinology. Translating the Tao Teh Ching has long been regarded as the ultimate litmus test for a translator of Chinese. Reid has passed the test with flying colors."

- Daniel P. Reid (no relation), translator of *My Journey in Mystic China* (Chinese memoirs of the late writer & translator John Blofeld), author of *The Tao of Health, Sex, & Longevity*, and *The Tao of Detox*

-

"Wonderful work and translation. I am growing spiritually from reading it!"

- Dr. Michael Saso, Professor Emeritus of Religion, University of Hawai'I, Ph.D Classical Chinese, Author of *Teachings of Taoist Master Chuang*

“Ho-Shang Kung lived in today’s Langya area of Shandong Province (琅琊). He was an accomplished Taoist alchemy practitioner and it is said that he became an immortal on Tiantai mountain – nowadays Rhi-Zhao county, Shandong Province.

His commentary on the *Tao Te Ching*(河上公章句) naturally carries a deep understanding of Taoist meditation, and differs greatly from that of other commentators who tried to explain the Tao Te Ching only philosophically. Written at a time when there were almost no related commentaries, it has long been the most popular. To translate it by following the exact meaning is not an easy task, but Dan G. Reid is well capable of such a task. By reading this commentary, readers can gain additional perspective and understanding of this ancient classic.”

- Master Hu Xuezhi, author of *Revealing the Tao Te Ching*, and *Discourse on Chuang Tzu*. Master Hu teaches Taoist meditation and philosophy on Wudang Mountain

“I found this book to be very helpful in bringing a deeper understanding of Lao Zi's work and of how it has been understood in ancient times… This volume provides a wonderful tool to delve into the text in a very deep way."

- Review by Solala Towler (author of *Practicing the Tao Te Ching*) in The Empty Vessel: The journal of Taoist philosophy and practice, Winter 2017 issue

“In my own use of the DDJ as a Daoist practice scripture it was very important to clearly see how this DDJ commentary is a guide for key Daoist concepts like emptiness, wuwei, stillness, speaking few words, yielding, the quiet dragon, and more.

As a Daoist priest and founder of a Daoist lineage, American Dragon Gate Lineage, I highly recommend this translation by Reid and have actually made it required study for my priests-in-training.”

- Shifu Michael J. Rinaldini, Daoist Abbot and founder of the American Dragon Gate Lineage of Quanzhen Daoism. Author of *A Daoist Practice Journal: Come Laugh With Me*; and *A Daoist Practice Journal, Book 2: Circle Walking, Qigong & Daoist Cultivation*

The Heshang Gong

Commentary
on
Lao Zi's Dao De Jing

The Heshang Gong Commentary on Lao Zi's Dao De Jing

老子河上公章句
by Heshang Gong, and Lao Zi

Second Edition

Translations and additional commentary by Dan G. Reid

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Cover art: "Inquiring of the Dao," by Dai Jin (1388-1462 AD). A depiction of the Yellow Emperor going out to meet the Daoist Sage Guangcheng Zi in the Kongtong Mountains, the story of which appears in the *Zhuang Zi*, chapter 11.

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Thank you to the many teachers, scholars, priests, monks, and practitioners who have shared insights into Daoism and Classical Chinese in online forums. Your consideration for nameless strangers has led to the development of this book. Were it not for your thoughtful input, correspondence, and fellowship, I would not have had the knowledge or inspiration to put this translation out into the world.

Distant waves, each page
Riding winds of ancient words
Back to the ocean

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The Heshang Gong Commentary on Lao Zi's Dao De Jing

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Dan G. Reid

Translator's Introduction

Romanization and Pronuciation of Chinese Words

Please note that modern pinyin spelling of Chinese names and terms will be used throughout this book. While many English speakers have become accustomed to the earlier Wade-Giles romanization of Chinese words, few native Chinese speakers outside of Taiwan recognize words spelled in this system. Moreover, the linking of syllables in pinyin renders many names and terms unrecognizable to those familiar only with Wade-Giles. Thus, Tao Te Ching will appear as Dao De Jing, Lao Tzu as Lao Zi, Chuang Tzu as Zhuang Zi, hsing as xing, Ho-Shang Kung as Heshang Gong, and so forth. For a brief guide on pinyin pronunciation, please see the appendix.

Heshang Gong, the Riverside Elder

Very little is known about the life of Heshang Gong. His reputation is that of a reclusive hermit, and his name is only known as the epithet Riverside Elder (河上公 ;[1] pinyin romanization: Heshang Gong; Wade-Giles romanization: Ho-Shang Kung).

Heshang Gong's insights into Daoist wisdom, history, cosmogony, and meditative practices, have been an essential aid to understanding the meaning, applicability, and cultural context of the *Dao De Jing* for approximately 2000 years. He was the first to explain, in written form, its many paradoxical idioms and place them in context of the time and culture in which they were written. Every subsequent commentary, re-editing, and translation of the *Dao De Jing* has absorbed some degree of influence from his work.

While Heshang Gong's contributions to linguistic preservation have been appreciated for millennia, his early articulation of the connections between Lao Zi's verses and the Daoist meditative practices later known as Nei Dan is not so well acknowledged.

Nei Dan, or Internal Alchemy, seeks to transcend the limits of physical existence through the cultivation of the "three treasures" of vital essence (ching/jing), energy-breath (chi/qi), and spirit (shen). This is done, in part, by merging one's pure nature (xing) with destiny-life-force (ming), said later by Ma Danyang (11 century AD) to be one of the many turns of phrase for the merging of energy-breath and spirit.[2] Such concepts can be found in earlier Chinese texts, including the *Zhuang Zi* (circa 350 BC), and later become a central focus in cryptic and detailed Nei Dan manuals, culminating in the teachings of the Quan Zhen (Complete Reality) patriarchs (circa 8th to 11th century AD), to whom over 80 religious Daoist sects are traced. While some of these manuals provide rather specific and detailed energetic maneuvers, they more commonly explain the processes of transformation which they say will naturally follow a prolonged clarity of the heart and mind. This is the same method described by Heshang Gong, for example, in his comments on chapter 16 ("… *peace and stillness are the*

correct way to return to pure nature (xing) and the destiny-life-force (ming).") and chapter 38:

> (The rulers of antiquity) did not teach the people virtues, but caused them to follow their natural spontaneity, thereby supporting the development of their pure nature (xing), and destiny-life-force (ming).

Heshang Gong's place in the Daoist tradition is a subject meriting an entire book of its own, and so cannot be approached here in considerable depth. An overwhelming validation of Heshang Gong's import, however, can be found in the teachings of Ma Danyang. Ma Danyang, the second patriarch of the Quan Zhen Daoist Sect, was the closest student of Wang Chongyang who in the mid 11th century AD developed the Quan Zhen Sect of Daoism. The Quan Zhen Sect (Quan Zhen Pai) is one of the only two major lineage branches of Daoism, the other being Zheng Yi Pai, aka Tian Shi Dao, or "Way of the Celestial Masters" which began in 142 AD. In the *Discourse Record of Perfected Danyang*, Ma Danyang dissuades students from excessive textual study, warning that it will confuse the mind and obstruct actual training. He recommends, however, that if a student wants to study scriptures they should read only Heshang Gong's commentary on the *Dao De Jing*, and Master Jin Ling's commentary on the *Yin Fu Jing (Classic of Yin Talisman)*. Reading nothing but these two texts, and presumably following his personal guidance, Ma Danyang says will be enough for them to train in internal cultivation "without obstruction."[3]

Another area in which Heshang Gong's commentary is significant in the history of Chinese energy cultivation is his departure from some earlier manuals' "jing building" methods, which relied largely on diet and regimented sexual activity.[4] Though he briefly notes the importance of stretching in order to maintain a supple body,[5] provides general cautions against an indulgent diet, and provides much guidance for one's conduct in the world, Heshang Gong eschewed all "external" approaches to internal cultivation. This is to say that, beyond receiving a balance of nutrients from food, he makes no mention of ingesting, or absorbing, earthly substances in order to nourish jing, qi, and shen. Instead, Heshang Gong's commentary presents a path to nourishing the three treasures followed by connecting to Nature's Way and Virtue (Dao and De), returning to the simplicity of nature

(zi ran), arriving at the tranquility of desirelessness, and reflecting the principles of Dao in our worldly interactions. Thereby, one roots themselves in the beneficence of Dao, Virtue, and Oneness, while becoming a conduit for the natural and harmonious order of all things.

In Heshang Gong's elucidations of Lao Zi's imagery, he refers to ancient Chinese medical concepts which figure prominently in later Nei Dan manuals. This suggests that Heshang Gong was familiar with some of the many influential texts available during the Han Dynasty (206BC-220AD), such as "*The Yellow Emperor's Treatise on Internal Medicine*," and perhaps also the *Guan Zi* [6] which contained the *Nei Ye (Internal Cultivation)* and other texts on the "art of the heart-mind" (xin shu).

The *Guan Zi* was edited near the turn of the first century by a famous scholar and official named Liu Xiang (77-6BC), who also edited and catalogued much of the Han imperial library. Some of Heshang Gong's terminology shows the influence of Han literature, an example of which can be found in the term zhi pu 質樸. Literally "plain substance," zhi pu means "natural and simple," or "unsophisticated." The popular English rendering of pu, "simple," as "the uncarved block" in Daoist translations, likely stemmed from Heshang Gong's use of this term. It appears in several prominent Han texts, including the *Han Shu*, and *Shuo Yuan*, both of which were part of Liu Xiang's work.

Liu Xiang was a distant relative of Liu An,[7] who edited the *Huainan Zi*, [8] an important compilation of Daoist thought which Heshang Gong also appears to have read, given the breadth of his knowledge in areas of Daoist theory. If Heshang Gong did, in fact, have access to these texts, it seems likely that he would have also discovered and read the *Nei Ye (Internal Cultivation)*, *Xin Shu (Art of the Heart-Mind)*, and *Bai Xin (Purifying the Heart-Mind)*, early Daoist meditation texts with many similarities to the *Dao De Jing*. Those who have studied the *Nei Ye* (c. 350 BC) may perceive traces of its influence in Heshang Gong's commentary on the *Dao De Jing*, though it may be that these similarities stemmed from a common oral tradition in which Heshang Gong was immersed. The latter of these two theories is explored further in my second book, *The Thread of Dao: Unraveling Early Daoist Oral Traditions in Guan Zi's Purifying the Heart-Mind (Bai Xin), Art of the Heart-Mind (Xin Shu), and Internal Cultivation (Nei Ye)*.

It would be conjecture to suggest that Heshang Gong may have been a descendent of the Liu family, but less so to suggest that he knew of their contributions during the Han era, and that someone with Heshang Gong's level of study had access to many of the texts made more readily accessible by the Liu family.[9]

This level of scholarship and literary access might also account for Heshang Gong's knowledge of ancient Chinese medical theory, and his employment of terms such as "the ethereal and bodily spirits (hun and po)," "the six emotions," and "the five natures," in his commentary.[10] The theories behind these terms explain the correlations between emotion and related organs, their various states of balance and imbalance, and their influences on bodily health, vitality, longevity, and personal virtues. That Heshang Gong was aware of these theories before they became a central part of the Daoist lexicon, suggests that he may have also been a practicing healer – a vocation to which many Daoist adepts are drawn, following years of interest in the interactions between body and spirit. This familiarity with Chinese medical theory would have likely influenced his equation of governing the nation with governing the body, as would a familiarity with Guan Zi's texts on the art of the heart-mind, all of which some 400-500 years earlier employed this paradigm of political metaphors when discussing matters of the body and spirit.

Though he managed to live and practice his guidance, remaining humble and inconspicuous, the legacy of Heshang Gong's work continues to bless untold millions as the Dao De Jing's principal commentary. He remains, still to this day, a bounteous example of Lao Zi's words: "When achievements are completed, their recognition should continue, but the individual should withdraw."

Dao, De, and Oneness in Heshang Gong's Commentary (added to 2nd edition)

One of the early terms used by Lao Zi to describe internal cultivation is "embracing Oneness" (抱一 , bao yi), found also in the Guan Zi as "guarding Oneness" (守一) and "holding Oneness" (執一). The importance of this concept is shown further in the frequency of its appearance in Heshang Gong's commentary. I have explored early instructions on the practice of "embracing Oneness" in the introduction to *The Thread of Dao: Unraveling Early Daoist Oral Traditions*, relating especially to consolidating will (zhi) and intention (yi) as described in the *Guan Zi* and *Guigu Zi*. This consolidation of will and intention, however, is more applicable to the *technique* of embracing Oneness, rather than a definition of Oneness itself.

To understand what these Daoist masters meant by Oneness, we may find invaluable keys in Heshang Gong's commentary. For example, in his comments on Lao Zi's chapter 51, Heshang Gong appears to offer the meaning behind his frequent use of the term Oneness:

> 道生之，道生萬物。
> "Dao actuates them"
> Dao actuates the myriad things.
> 德畜之，德，一也。一主布氣而蓄養物形之，一為萬物設形像也。
> "Virtue takes care of them"
> "Virtue," here, means "Oneness." Oneness is the host of all things. It surrounds them with energy-breath, and gathers and rears things into form. Oneness establishes the form and image of all things.
> 勢成之。一為萬物作寒暑之勢以成之。
> "Power completes them"
> Oneness uses the power of hot and cold to complete all things.

As he reveals here, when Heshang Gong refers to Oneness, or holding Oneness, he refers not so much to unity and wholeness as he does to the power which spontaneously harmonizes and balances all things – otherwise

often referred to as De/Virtue. Similar to the name of the Zheng Yi Daoist sect (often translated as "Orthodox Unity"), Oneness is the zheng yi – the "aligning oneness" to which all things are subject. The movement of De is the movement towards wholeness. Not an assimilation into oneness (thought this literally translates " 一 "), but the cooperative diversity of wholeness. This is the nature of De/Oneness, and the expression of the all encompassing Dao. Chapters 51, 22, and 39, especially, reveal a force or *Virtue* that brings about this alignment, wholeness, balance and harmony. Lao Zi calls this force De, the Virtue (of Dao), while Heshang Gong tends to refer to it as Oneness. As chapter 51 explains:

Dao actuates them
Virtue takes care of them, extends their lifespans
Teaches them, completes them
Tests them, raises them
And brings them back (to their pure natures)

Chapter 22 describes this process:

That which is flexible is preserved
That which is bent is straightened
That which is empty is filled
That which is broken is repaired
That which is lacking acquires
That which is excessive becomes confused
Therefore, the Sage embraces Oneness
So as to bring the world into alignment

Chapter 39 (which happens to follow the *Dao De Jing*'s defining chapter on Virtue – chapter 38) describes the effect of embracing Oneness, and provides ample support for Heshang Gong's equation of Oneness with Virtue, knowing from chapter 51 that Virtue is attributed the power of perfecting and completing life:

In the beginning was the attainment of Oneness

Heaven attained Oneness and became clear
Earth attained Oneness and became serene
Gods attained Oneness and became spiritually powerful
Valleys attained Oneness and became full
The myriad things attained Oneness and were born

Lords and kings attained Oneness and all under Heaven became loyal

Another helpful example to understand this equation is Heshang Gong's reference to chapter 39 in his comments on chapter 10:

> "Embrace Oneness. Can you do this without letting (your coporeal spirits) flee?"
> People who can embrace Oneness, and not let it leave them, extend their lives. In Oneness, Dao began to situate life by the supreme harmony of the vital energy-breaths. Therefore it is said: "Oneness covered the world with names."
>
> Heaven attained Oneness and became clear. Earth attained Oneness and became serene. Lords and kings attained Oneness and became upright and peace-loving. Going within, it is mind; going outwards it is actions; in covering all with its blessing, it is Virtue. All the names together are One. Referring to Oneness, it is said: "In a unified consciousness, there is no division (or doubt)."

To further this equation of De, the force which fosters and perfects life, with Oneness, we can also look to the ancient text, *The Great One Gave Birth to Water (Tai Yi Sheng Shui)*, found alongside the earliest known fragments of the *Dao De Jing* at Guodian, and dated to around 350 BC. The *Tai Yi Sheng Shui* describes "the Great One":

> The Great One gave birth to water. Water then returned to meet the Great One and thereby fashioned Heaven. Heaven returned to meet the Great One and thereby fashioned Earth. Heaven and Earth joined together and thereby fashioned spirit (conscious essence) and illumination. Spirit and illumination joined together and thereby fashioned Yin and Yang. Yin and Yang joined together and thereby fashioned the Four Seasons. The Four Seasons joined together and thereby fashioned Cold and Hot. Cold and Hot joined together and thereby fashioned Moisture and Dryness. Moisture and Dryness joined together, thereby fashioning the year, and then stopped...
>
> Thus, the Great One is found in water. It moves through the seasons, completes a cycle, and then begins again. Thus, the Great One is the mother of the myriad things. At once diminishing, at once filling, it

> uses itself as the thread (joining) all things. This is what Heaven cannot kill, what Earth cannot bury, and what Yin and Yang cannot fashion. Those of noble character who understand this, we call Sages. [11]

With these descriptions of the Great One, both in the *Dao De Jing*, and *Tai Yi Sheng Shui*, we can see that Virtue is, as Heshang Gong points out in chapter 51, another title for Oneness. Thus, in finding Heshang Gong's mentions of "embracing Oneness," we can understand this as embracing the power of Dao – Virtue (De) – and allowing it to spontaneously harmonize, purify, and align – to spontaneously (zi ran) "govern" us internally and bring about the Great Peace (tai ping) that Dao brings to a nation.

As Heshang Gong demonstrates throughout his commentary, the Dao of governing the body and the Dao of governing the nation follow the same principles, revealing that Lao Zi's verses speak simultaneously of three dimensions: 1) governing oneself; 2) governing the nation; and 3) the principles of Dao governing all existence and non-existence as implemented through Oneness – Virtue.

Dao, De, and Oneness in Heshang Gong's Commentary (from 1st edition)

Given the multitude of interpretations regarding these mysteries, whether personal, religious, or scholarly, the following is perhaps best received as a working understanding, rather than as a definition of terms.

Though written, literally, as " 德 virtue," De, in Daoism, is the nature of Dao. Dao is the ordering principles, " 道 the Path, Way, or method," through which all things come into being, and reach the complete perfection of their intrinsic natures(性 xing). While considered an independent part of existence, De is also the nature, quality, or character, of Dao's principles. It is this character of Dao's principles which make Dao the mother of all things. As Lao Zi explains in chapter 51:

Dao actuates them
Virtue takes care of them, extends their lifespans
Teaches them, completes them
Tests them, raises them
And brings them back (to their pure natures)

Actuates them but does not possess them
Sets them in motion but does not expect of them
Extends their lives without ruling and controlling
This is called Fathomless Virtue

All of existence is united by its shared origin in Dao, and reliance on Virtue for continuation. In this shared origin, and base of perpetuation, lies Oneness. While Oneness refers to the unification of all things, this unification also resides in each and every thing, and holds the key to realizing Dao. As Heshang Gong comments in chapter one: "People who maintain the absence of desire will be able to observe the key to Dao. 'The key' is Oneness." That Oneness can be found in all things is also apparent in Lao Zi's words from chapter one:

Thus, always without desires
Observing its inner subtlety
Always with desires

Observing its outer surface
These two were born together, yet differ in name
Together, they are called Fathomless Mystery
This mystery, ever more mystifying
Is a multitude of gates
All leading to the subtlety within

Dao can be observed in the external world, and internal world, of all things. Everything is governed by its principles. To apprehend, not only the unification *of*, but the unification *within* all things, is also called Oneness. Heshang Gong explains that by "holding Oneness" it is possible to bring about harmony in ourselves and in the world. To hold Oneness is to embrace Dao, Virtue, and everything in existence, within, while knowing that these are not separate. They exist together in oneself and all other things. There is no separation, but merely our perception of it.

As Heshang Gong comments in chapter 10, "Referring to Oneness, it is said: 'In a unified consciousness, there is no division (or doubt)'." By seeing things as separate from the Oneness, we separate ourselves from Dao and Virtue, from Heaven and Earth, and from the path of returning to our intrinsic natures. By moving towards this separation, we cannot be perfected – we cannot be completed according to the intrinsic natures bestowed upon us before birth.

As a peach tree can only reach the complete perfection of its intrinsic nature as a peach tree, we can only reach the complete perfection of the intrinsic natures bestowed upon us; and we can only do this by not resisting Dao and Virtue, for it is Dao and Virtue which bring it about. All we can do, is to get our separate-minded and interfering desires out of their way. As Lao Zi says in chapter 37

The Dao is always effortless yet without inaction
When lords and kings can guard this within
The myriad things eventually transform themselves
Transforming, yet desiring to do so intentionally
I pacify this desire with the simplicity of the nameless

The simplicity of the nameless removes all desires
When the tranquility of desirelessness is established
The world stabilizes itself

“The simplicity of the nameless” refers to Dao; however, this phrase also alludes to an important lesson in the *Dao De Jing* which is that people effectively destroy themselves by seeking fame and renown. This, again, brings us back to separateness, desires, and veering from the clear path. Chapter 53 illustrates that people love to distinguish themselves, yet stray far from Dao by doing so. “The granaries are so empty, yet their clothes so full of colour,” could be taken as a comment on the inner condition awaiting those who desire to be distinguished. Heshang Gong also makes this important point clear in his final comment, on chapter 81, “(Sages) do not follow lowly competitions for merit or fame, and as a result are able to retain their wisdom and merits.”

Ethics and Kindness in the Dao De Jing (added to 2nd edition)

A tendency to deny that the *Dao De Jing* has any ethical framework, or teachings of kindness towards others, has persisted in both the East and the West. This is likely due to longstanding competitions between Buddhists, Confucians, and Daoists, with the added influence of Christian missionaries – often unwitting participants in Western imperialism and cultural colonization – all of whom seized on their misunderstanding of a few chapters that appear to scoff at common ethics. A simple contextualization within the *Dao De Jing* itself shows that these chapters, in fact, warn of fabricated demonstrations of virtue which arise when individuals lose their inner harmony and groups lose their collective harmony, generally as a result of avarice and envy (see chapter 3).

Rather than simply offering a checklist of moral prescriptions, Lao Zi attempts to provide a guide to inner harmony, knowing that when people attain this harmony and contentment they will naturally seek to live out this inner harmony with others, in peace. Rather than list thousands of "correct" behaviours for every situation, Lao Zi sought to instill that from which all good behaviours arise, working from within the individual to extend out to society. Using external authority, law, praise and shame to coerce internally disharmonious people into harmonious behaviour does not solve the root of the problem, but only encourages people to act out of a desire for reward or a fear of punishment. This strategy is unreliable and unsustainable, as the behaviours it encourages will disappear with the rewards and punishments.

> **If I were steadfast in understanding**
> **I would simply walk the Great Path**
> **Having only one rightful fear**
> **The Great Way is like cleared land**
> **Yet the people love narrow tracks**
> (*Dao De Jing*, chapter 53)

The difficulty is not that people are unable to distinguish right from wrong, but that their desires, envy, and conceit cause them to lose

contentment, to contend with one another, and to prove their superiority. Thus, Lao Zi demonstrated these tendencies while showing the path to contentment, to self-sufficiency, where such behaviours would dissolve as people return to their inborn virtues and their inborn desire to live in harmony with nature and other human beings.

To break down Lao Zi's teachings into a checklist of prescribed morals would be to miss his point entirely – that morality cannot be prescribed, that people should return to their inborn virtue, and that the virtuous should not try to force others by telling them what to do. Thus, writing a list of "do's and do not's" would be antithetical to his teachings on virtue. However, having noted a common claim that Lao Zi made no distinctions between good behaviour and bad behaviour, the following examples of such distinctions, found in chapters of the *Dao De Jing*, may serve to allay such claims. While many chapters show no concern for any such distinctions, those which do generally echo the guidance found in the following chapters, which may be summarized as:

Ch.2: Do not be conceited or envious. Do not try to show that you're better than others.
Ch.3: Do not stir up trouble between people.
ch. 5: Do not be partial in judgement.
ch. 7: Put others first. Do not be selfish.
ch. 8: Do your best and benefit others.
ch. 9: Do not be greedy.
ch. 17: Do not benefit others only for recognition.
ch. 18: Adhere to the above guidance so that harmony and peacefulness do not break down, for this breakdown necessitates fabricated acts of virtue in order to avoid total chaos.
ch. 19: Do not act "holier than thou."
ch. 20: Do not get so caught up in life that you lose your connection with the Source.

Another common tendency is to deny any reading of kindness in Lao Zi's teachings, or otherwise claim that the perception of kindness in his teachings is merely an implantation of Christian values. This too may be a product of propaganda, likely from both Christian missionaries and the

centuries old competition between Buddhists and Daoists. What is most ironic about this assertion is that it so often carries an expressed disdain for Christian imperialism – blaming this imperialism for a perceived projection of Christian values into Daoist literature. These allegations of Christian cultural colonialism, however, curiously overlook the monopoly they concede to Christianity on teachings of love, mercy, kindness, charity, and civility. This only perpetuates the very propaganda that allowed Christian imperialism to turn so many people against their native traditions and cultures despite such blatant evidence of these virtues in their own cultural practices. Teachings of kindness are, in fact, pervasive in the writings of Lao Zi. For example, in his description of Dao's Virtue (De) from chapter 51:

> **Dao actuates them**
> **Virtue takes care of them, extends their lifespans**
> **Teaches them, completes them**
> **Tests them, raises them**
> **And brings them back (to their pure natures)**
> **Actuates them but does not possess them**
> **Sets them in motion but does not expect of them**
> **Extends their lives without ruling and controlling**
> **This is called Fathomless Virtue**

The selflessness of De also proves to be an ideal for the Sage. In chapter 7, for example, Lao Zi states:

> **Therefore, sages leave themselves behind**
> **And they end up in front**
> **They do not cater to themselves**
> **Yet they persist**
> **Is it not because they are without selfishness and wickedness**
> **That they are able to fulfill themselves?**

This virtue of selfless beneficence, and disregard for reciprocity, can be seen throughout the *Dao De Jing*. Surely, Daoists may deny that this kindness is connected to morals, in the common sense, because it is simply an expression of inborn nature. This integral nuance, however, does not change the ultimate reception and benefit of this behaviour as kindness, love, and charity – a beneficence without expectation of reciprocity. Further, English is not the only language with overlays of nuance in these

terms. Just as kindness, charity, love, mercy, and civility all fractionally imply each other, so do ci (kindness, compassion), ai (love, care), and ren (benevolence, civility) fractionally imply each other. So, while Lao Zi's teachings arguably transcend ethical rules, one would be completely amiss to overlook his admonishments for kindness, care, and compassion in personifying Fathomless (Mysterious) Virtue – Xuan De.

The Politics of Lao Zi (added to 2nd edition)

Similar to overlooking his teachings on kindness is the common assertion that Lao Zi was apolitical. If we were to speak of Zhuang Zi, the second most famous Warring States Era Daoist, such an assertion might be correct, but in the case of Lao Zi we simply need to recall that the *Dao De Jing* is quite overtly a political treatise, so much so that some scholars tenaciously maintain this as its central focus. As a Sage, Lao Zi sought to heal society's ills both at the individual spiritual level and at the global political level. Granted, Lao Zi's advice generally rested on being less political, on demonstrating that stability will be attained when political power is employed sparingly and never abused. In expounding on this main tenet, however, he advised rulers in several areas of politics, including corruption, taxes, distribution of wealth, empire building, diplomacy, leadership strategy, lawmaking, punishment, and even, arguably, battle strategy.[12] Nonetheless, Lao Zi taught that, superior to all of these considerations, the Sage's power comes from minimizing desires so that he can hold constantly to Dao and cultivate its Virtue within, knowing that this inner power would express itself in the Sage's harmonious Dao of government.

While Lao Zi's strategy is known as "not doing" (wu wei), he also advocated political reform and laid the groundwork for a strategic pacifism (not to be confused with passivism) based in self-cultivation. These strategies included not inciting competition, avarice, and arrogance amongst people – some of the favourite tools of those who would get others to do their bidding by tempting them with fame, money, and vanity. Lao Zi observed the long term consequences of stirring up these motivations, especially when they corrupted even the ruler. He is very direct with imperatives that dispute and political expansion must be addressed without recourse to war, and that nations and states should work together for mutual benefit.[13] By seeking to benefit smaller nations, larger nations could secure the prosperity and stability of larger trade networks, while the virtue of Daoist rule would make these nations nearly unassailable, winning the

loyalty of the common people at home and all around the world who wished to live in such an enlightened nation. While Lao Zi knew that his teachings could heal a great deal of suffering at the individual level, he also knew that if rulers could first heal themselves through inner unity and Virtue, they could bring great healing, prosperity, and vitality to Humanity. Given the damage that human beings are doing even to the Earth and Sky today, sage leaders could indeed transform Heaven, Earth, and Humanity by cultivating the Virtue of Dao and, with minimal resistance, almost unnoticeably instituting this harmony throughout “all under Heaven.”

Dating the Heshang Gong Commentary

Given that The Riverside Elder maintained a prudent level of obscurity, as many ascetic mystics do, scholars have determined a wide variety of possible dates for the writing of his commentary. Tradition suggests around 160 BC, though some scholars suggest the 3rd or 4th century AD, while others suggest closer to the turn of the second century AD.

The primary evidence that Heshang Gong did not write his commentary around 160 BC is a single use of the term "the ten directions"[14] in chapter ten. This may suggest Buddhist influence because, previous to Buddhist contact in China (mid first-century AD), the directions were referred to as "the eight directions 八極 ,"[15] "the four corners 四方 ,"[16] or "the six boundaries (of the universe) 六合 ."[17] It was common to mention "the four corners and the six boundaries" in the same sentence to refer to both earthly and celestial space; however, Heshang Gong would have been the first to group these two designations together as "the ten directions."

Heshang Gong also uses the term "the five natures, 五性 " which begins to appear in texts around the middle of the first century AD. In chapter 34, he uses the term "ai yang, 愛養 , loving and nurturing/raising" ("(Dao) loves and raises the myriad things"). Ai yang was later changed in this stanza to "yi yang, 衣養 , clothing and nurturing/raising." Ai yang 愛養 was not a very commonly used term, but does appear in other texts from around the turn of the first century AD.

For the above reasons, it appears that Heshang Gong wrote his commentary no earlier than 100AD.

Heshang Gong's commentary includes references to mystical concepts and terms which began to develop in much greater detail during the 3rd and 4th century, and this has led some scholars to date his commentary to this time period. Some also believed that Heshang Gong edited earlier versions of the *Dao De Jing* according to changes made by Wang Bi, the editor of what is now the most commonly used *Dao De Jing* text, and who lived between 226-249 AD.

All of this in consideration, it seems safe to date Heshang Gong around 130 AD, thanks to a rather mythological tale about him written by Ge Xuan

(164–244 AD),[18] in which Heshang Gong is sought out along the banks of the Yellow River by Emperor Wen of Han (202–157 BC), who was seeking instruction in the *Dao De Jing*. In this story, Heshang Gong floats up into the air, and admonishes the emperor's attempt to ply him with wealth and honour before giving the emperor his written commentary.

Ge Xuan is a highly revered figure in Daoism, as is his paternal grandnephew, Ge Hong (283–343 AD), both of whom were prominent in the development of Daoist Internal Alchemy (Nei Dan). This story shows that Heshang Gong was already a mythological figure by Ge Xuan's time, and so could not have based his edits to the *Dao De Jing* on those of Wang Bi. To put Heshang Gong somewhere after the arrival of Buddhism in China, and long enough before Ge Xuan (164–244 AD) that local stories of him had faded into the wind, it is most probable that Heshang Gong studied near the banks of the Yellow River in and around 130 AD.

Dating the Dao De Jing, and its Author(s)

The true historical identity of Lao Zi(老子 , Venerable Master), the author of the *Dao De Jing*(道德經, The Classic of [Nature's] Way and Virtue) , has been widely contested for over two thousand years. The earliest possible author is said to be Li Erh, posthumously known as Li Dan. According to historian Sima Qian (circa 100 BC), Li Erh was an official librarian in the court of Zhou, an elder contemporary of Confucius, and was said to have instructed Confucius in the Rites of Zhou. Whether refutations of this history are incontrovertible will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

The fact that some chapters differ widely in style and terminology has lead scholars to conclude that the *Dao De Jing* was written by various authors. The *Dao De Jing* is also believed by many to be a compilation of songs from an oral tradition, as many chapters have an obvious rhyming, lyrical, quality to them. These two theories are mostly in agreement.

In the *Dao De Jing*, Lao Zi often quotes ancient sayings which reveal the workings of Dao in nature. If the *Dao De Jing* was written close to 500 BC, then these sayings, variously either folk saying or attributed to "the ancients,"[19] could potentially go back at least as far as King Wen and the Duke of Zhou, who are attributed with writing the original accompanying text for the Yi Jing (I Ching) hexagrams, circa 1100 BC. If Lao Zi was an expert in the Rites of Zhou, as the above story about Confucius suggests, then it stands to reason that these sayings were part of the ancient Zhou tradition.

Many also say that the criticism of Confucian morals in the *Dao De Jing* proves that it must have been written after the time of Confucius. What this theory does not account for, however, is that Confucius received his formal moral education in school before he went on to teach these morals on a more profound level. Given that such morals were already a well established part of the education received by middle to upper class youth, it was not necessary for Confucius to have written on these subjects before Lao Zi could comment on them.

The main reason it is so difficult to date the *Dao De Jing* is because all books which criticized tyrannical rule were burned in 213 BC by Qin Shi Huang, the first emperor of the Qin dynasty, while following the guidance of Chancellor Li Si.

The earliest surviving copy of the *Dao De Jing*, from before this time, was found in the Guodian tomb, in 1993. This copy, dated to around 300 BC, appears to be an early manuscript which was later reconfigured and added to other writings to create the *Dao De Jing* as we know it today. This theory suggests that there was indeed more than one author of the *Dao De Jing*.

It may be possible, however, that the inhabitant of the Guodian tomb, a noble scholar and teacher to a crown prince of Chu, did not have the entire collection of the *Dao De Jing* chapters in his possession. Most of the other bamboo slips found in this tomb are from the Confucian school, so those who brought these slips may have only selected, or taught, excerpts from the *Dao De Jing* which were not in contradiction to their own beliefs, nor in contradiction to the goals of their emperors.

One notable difference in the Guodian text versus the "complete" text is that, while the Guodian text does contain a few stanzas warning against haphazard conquest, it is missing all of those which are most critical of conquest, namely the second half of chapter 48, and all of chapters 29, 69, 74, and 75. It could be speculated that such ideas within this text made it a less than welcome addition to the curriculum taught to an emperor's child. This would explain why, in this case, only essential excerpts were kept in writing.

Another possible explanation for missing verses, or the less than full acceptance of the *Dao De Jing* in the collection of this teacher, is the fact that it was found accompanied by the *Tai Yi Sheng Shui (The Great One Gave Birth to Water)*. Modern scholars generally agree that the similarities in this text to ideas in the *Dao De Jing* show that it was also part of an early development of the *Dao De Jing*. This may be the case, but it should be considered that the *Dao De Jing* may otherwise have been a relatively recent reformation of the ideas in the Tai Yi Sheng Shui, which had not yet been accepted by traditionalists.

Either theory might account for the fact that all chapters in the *Dao De Jing* that diverge from the cosmogony of the Tai Yi Sheng Shui are absent

in the Guodian text. Of the eight chapters which mention Virtue as a nurturing cosmic force,[20] none of them appear in the Guodian. Of the chapters which mention virtue as a character trait, four of nine[21] appear in the Guodian. When the missing chapters which refer to Virtue as a cosmic force are added to the text, the meaning of the word in all cases takes on a new significance by showing how cosmic Virtue reflects itself in people, giving all instances of the word a more mystical tone.

It might be that the cosmogony in the *Dao De Jing* was as influenced by the Tai Yi Sheng Shui, as it was reformative of it in re-writing its account of creation, much as the *Dao De Jing* was reformative of dominant ideas about the value of moral epistemology, and the value of conquest. This shift may have begun long before the Tai Yi Sheng Shui lost favour with the majority of scholars and traditionalists, and long before the Guodian scholar's time.

While the Tai Yi Sheng Shui speaks briefly of a cosmic Dao, has a number of parallels to the cosmogony of the *Dao De Jing*, and may have predated the *Dao De Jing*, this is not certain proof that the missing chapters of the *Dao De Jing* did not exist before 300 BC. If scholars at the time were faithful to the *Tai Yi Sheng Shui*, and loyal to the intellectual pursuit of virtue, then many chapters of the *Dao De Jing* would have contradicted some of their most sacredly held beliefs, and even put the value of their knowledge and professions in danger. This speculation is no certain proof as to why the Guodian *Dao De Jing* text was incomplete, but it is enough to say that there were compelling reasons for less than half of the text to be circulated amongst traditional scholars and teachers, beyond the fundamental difficulty of transporting heavy bamboo scrolls in ancient times.

Translating the Dao De Jing

The *Dao De Jing* is considered today to be the second most translated book in the world, second only to the Bible. Given the practice of translating the *Dao De Jing* as a way to study it, however, if all of these translations were to be published they would likely surpass the number of translations of the Bible, especially those made from the original Biblical Hebrew and Biblical Aramaic. Regardless, the relative size of the *Dao De Jing* makes it that such a comparison is not well matched.

The mysterious and terse language within the *Dao De Jing* offers many new discoveries to those who take up translating this text for themselves, even into modern Mandarin.

Because the ancient Chinese dialects are no longer spoken, “expert opinions” on correct translation can in many cases never be more than “opinions.” The way in which certain words are used to convey meaning in Classical Chinese do not correlate with the way by which these same words are used to convey meaning in English, or modern Mandarin.

The grammatical rules of Classical Chinese are very different from modern languages. For example, the subject of a sentence, articles, and specification as to whether a word is meant as a noun, verb, or adjective, may all be included or left out, often depending on style rather than grammar. To convey the same meaning between Classical Chinese and English may require a translator to add verbs, nouns, and articles which have been implied but omitted. Without which, English sentences will lack any definitive meaning, and thus fail to transmit intended meanings. Some later editors of the *Dao De Jing* even removed hundreds of words in order to make the text exactly 5000 characters. Given this ancient custom and style of reading and writing with minimal word usage, translators must be able to fill in the blanks while accurately conveying the original words and ideas of the text.

Notes on the Translation and Translator's Commentary

My commentary appears with the intention to consolidate the teachings of each chapter so as to make these teachings more accessible, and easier to implement in one's life. As with all comments on the Dao De Jing, these comments are limited to their own scope and should serve only as an offering, a starting point, an appetizer if you will, to begin one's own relationship with these teachings.

To differentiate authors, the format and fonts in each chapter will appear as follows:

Dao De Jing
Full chapter
By Lao Zi

老子河上公章句
“Line from Dao De Jing”
Commentary on line by Heshang Gong

One to several paragraphs of commentary by Dan G. Reid
This commentary may be anywhere from 50 to 800 words.

Due to the limitations of English pronouns, I have generally chosen “he” where pronouns for the Sage are required; however, the Sage (sheng ren) is not a gender specific term. I have also capitalized “the Sage” as an honourific; however, an equal argument could be made that “sage” is simply a description of character.

Spaces will appear in the translated commentary where I’ve added line breaks within the *Dao De Jing* chapters so as to create paragraphs within the text.

This translation has been created with the intention that it will appeal to the casual sinologist, as well as those with an understanding of Daoist meditation, mysticism, and parlance

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The Heshang Gong Commentary on Lao Zi's Dao De Jing(老子河上公章句)

Volume One
Dao: The Way (of Nature)
道

~ 1 ~

The path that can be told
Is not the Eternal Path
The name that can be named
Is not the Eternal Name
The Nameless is the origin of Heaven and Earth
The Named is the mother of the myriad things
Thus, always without desires
Observing its inner subtlety
Always with desires
Observing its outer surface
These two were born together, yet differ in name
Together, they are called Fathomless Mystery
This mystery, ever more mystifying
Is a multitude of gates
All leading to the subtlety within

Chapter One
體道 Form and Dao

道可道，謂經術政教之道也。
“ The path that can be told”
This refers to the way in which classic texts, the arts, and statecraft, are taught.
非常道。非自然生長之道也。常道當以無為養神，無事安民，含光藏暉，滅跡匿端，不可稱道。
“Is not the Eternal Path”
It is not the Path of natural spontaneity and long life. The Eternal Path nourishes the spirit with effortlessness. Taking no initiative, it brings peace to the people. It envelops light, conceals radiance, leaves no tracks, and hides its periphery. It is not possible to give a proper name to Dao.
名可名，謂富貴尊榮，高世之名也。
“The name that can be named”
This refers to the name which is the most lofty, honourable, venerable, and glorious, in the world.

非常名。非自然常在之名也。常名當如嬰兒之未言，雞子之未分，明珠在蚌中，美玉處石間，內雖昭昭，外如愚頑。
“Is not the Eternal Name”
(This loftiness) is not the name of eternal spontaneity. The Eternal Name can only be like that of a child who has not yet spoken; like baby chicks which have not come out of their eggs; like a brilliant and precious pearl which is still within its oyster; like beautiful jade which is still between the rocks. Internally, it is bright and luminous, while externally, it seems dull and dim. [22]
無名，天地之始。無名者謂道，道無形，故不可名也。始者道本也，吐氣布化，出於虛無，為天地本始也。
“ The Nameless is the origin of Heaven and Earth”
“The nameless” refers to Dao. Dao is without form. This is why it cannot be named. “The origin” is Dao – the root. It springs forth energy-breath, covering and transforming. It comes out of emptiness and nothingness. It is the root from which Heaven and Earth began.
有名，萬物之母。有名謂天地。天地有形位、有陰陽、有柔剛，是其有名也。萬物母者，天地含氣生萬物，長大成熟，如母之養子也。
“The Named is the mother of the myriad things”
“The named” refers to Heaven and Earth. Heaven and Earth are the seat of form. They are yin and yang, soft and hard. This is why they have names. They are the mother of the myriad things because Heaven and Earth accumulate energy-breath and give birth to the myriad things, maturing their great and lasting completion like a mother supports her child.
故常無欲，以觀其妙；妙，要也。人常能無欲，則可以觀道之要，要謂一也。一出布名道，讚敘明是非。
“Thus, always without desires, observing its (inner) subtlety”
The “subtlety,” here, means the key. People who maintain the absence of desire will be able to observe the key to Dao. “The key” is Oneness. Oneness sends forth and proliferates the names of Dao, to which people sing praises for having clarified right from wrong.
常有欲，以觀其徼。徼，歸也。常有欲之人，可以觀世俗之所歸趣也。
“Always with desires, observing its outer surface”
The “outer surfaces” are what people return to. By maintaining the desires that people commonly have, you can observe the ways of their time and place, to which they continually return.

此兩者，同出而異名，兩者，謂有欲無欲也。同出者，同出人心也。而異名者，所名各異也。名無欲者長存，名有欲者亡身也。
“These two were born together, yet differ in name”
“These two” refers to the presence of desire, and the absence of desire. They are born together because they are both born in people’s hearts. They differ in name because each one has a different reputation. The reputation of the absence of desire is that it brings long life. The reputation of the presence of desire is that it destroys the body.
同謂之玄，玄，天也。言有欲之人與無欲之人，同受氣於天也。
“Together, they are called Fathomless Mystery”
Xuan (Fathomless) refers to Heaven. This is to say that people who have desires, and people who have no desires, both receive energy-breath from Heaven.
玄之又玄，天中復有天也。稟氣有厚薄，得中和滋液，則生賢聖，得錯亂污辱，則生貪淫也。
“(This) mystery, ever more mystifying”
Returning to the center of Heaven, there is another Heaven. It dispenses energy-breaths which can be potent or weak. Obtaining harmonious fertile fluid from its center, this gives birth to the worthy and wise; If one receives polluted, chaotic, and aberrant (energies), this gives birth to greed and licentiousness.
眾妙之門。能之天中復有天，稟氣有厚薄，除情去欲守中和，是謂知道要之門戶也。
“(Is a) multitude of gates, all leading to the profound subtlety (within)”
Heaven can return to the Heaven within itself, and dispense energy-breaths which are either potent or weak. Eliminating strong emotions, abandoning desires, and guarding harmony within: this is called “knowing the gate-key to the door of Dao.”

ONE

Heshang Gong explains that Dao cannot be named with lofty names because Dao is pure simplicity. These lofty names would suggest that Dao is something elegant and refined when, in reality, it is natural and perfectly unrefined. Beyond name and beyond erudition, Dao is cultivated through awareness and experience, both internal and external.

In the absence of desire, one can develop an unfiltered relationship with the present. As chapter one speaks to purifying the heart-mind, washing desires from the heart-mind will bring about the harmonizing balance of Oneness,[23] opening the gate to Dao within, and creating a pathway to the potent energies of Heaven.

On observing inner subtlety, Lao Zi's chapter 52 may offer additional guidance with its instructions for a Daoist meditation known as "turning the light around." With slightly different language than chapter one, chapter 52 states:

The world has an origin
Known as the Mother of All Under Heaven

(In chapter one, "the Nameless" is the mother of both Heaven and Earth)

Having known the Mother, know the Son
Having known the Son, guard the Mother within

(Heshang Gong comments that the Mother refers to Dao, while the Son refers to Oneness)

With no self, there is no danger

(As Dr. Michael Saso explains in regards to the Daoist Priest, Master Zhuang, "standing before the Imperial Throne of Heaven… the Daoist is the mediator between Heaven and Earth, the man or woman who in meditation can stand before the Eternal Dao because the Daoist has emptied himself or herself of all selfish desires and all thoughts."[24])

Seal the doors
Close the gate
By opening the doors
And increasing pursuits
There will be no help for you in later years

The gates and doors, in this case, are generally understood to refer to the sense doors of the body. The "multitude of gates" referred to in chapter one may be contextualized in innumerable of ways, but seeing the juxtaposition of themes between chapter 52 and chapter one, it may be that chapter one also suggest inwardly focusing the sense doors, as described in the following lines from chapter 52:

Seeing what is small is called "seeing clearly"
Maintaining suppleness is called "strengthening"
Use this light
Turn this clear vision back to its source
And you will not lose the body to illness
This is called "studying the Eternal"

"Seeing what is small" through this internal gazing appears to introduce later Buddhist mindfulness (vipissana) meditation, where meditators observe subtle changes of emotion, thought, feeling, and internal energies. This sensory observation, however, is what Daoist's call a "post-heaven" practice, dealing with subtleties of the material world, rather than

transcending the post-heaven and approaching the “pre-heaven,” perhaps what Lao Zi refers to in chapters one and 52 as “the Mother.” In any case, “observing the subtlety within,” as described in chapter one, offers the essence of the inner practices – “internal gazing (nei guang)” and “turning the light around (hui guang)” – found in chapter 52.

~ 2 ~

When the whole world knows the pleasing to be pleasing
This ends in despising
When all know the good to be good
In the end there is “not good”

Thus, existence and non-existence are born together
Difficulty and ease result in each other
Long and short are compared to each other
Above and below are opposites of each other
Noise and tone are harmonized by each other
Front and back accompany each other
Therefore, sages handle affairs with non-action

They practice wordless instruction
And the myriad things all take their places
Without responding

Given life, but not possessed
Acted for, but not expected of
Perfection is cultivated, and not dwelled upon
Surely, what is not dwelled upon
Does not leave

Chapter Two
養身 Self-Cultivation

天下皆知美之為美，自揚己美，使彰顯也。
“When the whole world knows the pleasing to be pleasing”
When the beautiful praise themselves, they put themselves on display.
斯惡已；有危亡也。
“This ends in despising”
They are in danger of being killed.
皆知善之為善，有功名也。
“When all know the good to be good”
When people are known to have accomplishments and fame

斯不善已。人所爭也。
“In the end there is ‘not good’”
Others compete and fight with them.

故有無相生，見有而為無也。
“Thus, existence and non-existence are born together”
Seeing existence, people determine non-existence
難易相成，見難而為易也。
“Difficulty and ease result in each other”
Seeing what is difficult, people determine what is easy.
長短相較，見短而為長也。
“Long and short are compared to each other”
Seeing what is short, people determine what is long.
高下相傾，見高而為下也。
“Above and below are opposites of each other”
Seeing what is high, people determine what is low.
音聲相和，上唱下必和也。
“Noise and tone are harmonized by each other”
When a superior sings, those below him must harmonize.
前後相隨。上行下必隨也。
“Front and back accompany each other”
When superiors advance, those below them must follow.
是以聖人處無為之事，以道治也。
“Therefore, sages handle affairs with non-action”
They allow Dao to bring order.

行不言之教，以身師導之也。
“They practice wordless instruction”
They make themselves a guiding example.
萬物作焉, 各自動也。
“And the myriad things all take their places”
Each one moves by themselves.
而不辭，不辭謝而逆止。
“Without responding”
They do not respond, or thank the Sage for his instruction, but rebellions come to an end.

生而不有，元氣生萬物而不有。
“Given life, yet not possessed”
The original energy-breath (yuan qi) gives birth to the myriad things, but does not possess them.
為而不恃，道所施為，不恃望其報也。
“Acted for, but not expected of”
Dao is the giver of action, but it does not expect any reciprocal offering.
功成而弗居。功成事就，退避不居其位。
“Perfection is cultivated, and not dwelled upon”
(Sages) bring things to completion as situations arrive, and then withdraw. They do not remain in positions of authority.
夫唯弗居，夫惟功成不居其位。
“Surely, what is not dwelled upon”
(Sages) cultivate perfection and do not linger in positions of authority .
是以不去。福德常在，不去其身也。此言不行不可隨，不言不可知疾。上六句有高下長短，君開一源，下生百端，百端之變，無不動亂。
“Does not leave”
The blessing of Virtue will always remain, and not leave (such) a person. Those who do not advance cannot be followed. Those who do not speak cannot have their weaknesses known. The above six phrases speak of high and low, and long and short, because when the ruler creates one opening, those below give rise to one hundred extremes. This requires one hundred adjustments, (and creates a situation where) there is nothing which is not in confusion.

TWO

Heshang Gong’s comments on chapter two highlight the balancing nature of antagonistic polarities, and how this antagonistic nature plays out amongst human beings. Trying to convince others of our worthiness, we invite their scorn. Trying to show our merits, we invite comparisons to those against whom we could never measure up. Wishing to appear great, we invite derision. By trying to exalt ourselves, we in fact humiliate ourselves, but if we humble ourselves, we may gradually and naturally accrue such recognition. In this wu wei, our talents may be recognized and promotions may be secured, without the obfuscation of self-promotion.

~ 3 ~

Do not exalt the worthy
And the people will not fight
Do not praise goods which are difficult to obtain
And the people will not steal
Do not display what is desirable
And their hearts will not be in chaos

Therefore, the Sage's government
Empties the heart and enriches the stomach
Softens the will and strengthens the bones
People then remain uncontrived and without desires
While the scheming do not dare to act
Act by not acting
And everything will fall into place

Chapter Three
安民 Bringing Peace to The People

不尚賢，賢謂世俗之賢，辯口明文，離道行權，去質為文也。不尚者，不貴之以祿，不貴之以官。
"Do not exalt the worthy"
"The worthy" refers here to those who are deemed by a generation's customs to be worthy. Their mouths are eloquent and their appearances are glorious, but they leave Dao and chase power and authority. They discard (real) substance and fabricate appearances. "Do not exalt," here, means do not honour them with high salaries or positions.
使民不爭。不爭功名，返自然也。
"And the people will not fight"
They will not fight for merit and fame, but will return to their natures.
不貴難得之貨，言人君不御好珍寶，黃金棄於山，珠玉捐於淵也。
"Do not praise goods which are difficult to obtain"
This is to say that rulers should not ride about in chariots embedded with precious jewels. They should put their gold back in the mountains and throw their jewels and jade into the abyss.

使民不為盜。上化清靜，下無貪人。
“And the people will not steal”
When those above are clear and tranquil, there will be no greedy men below them.
不見可欲，放鄭聲，遠美人。
“Do not display what is desirable”
Get rid of licentious music and send away tantalizers.
使心不亂。不邪淫，不惑亂也。
“And their hearts will not be in chaos”
Where there is no wickedness and licentiousness, there is no chaos and confusion.

是以聖人之治，說聖人治國與治身同也。
“Therefore, the Sage’s government”
The Sage governs the nation in the same way that he governs his body.
虛其心，除嗜欲，去亂煩。
“Empties the heart”
By eliminating cravings and desires, he banishes chaos and trouble.
實其腹，懷道抱一守，五神也。
“And enriches the stomach”
He carries Dao in his heart, embraces Oneness, and protects the five spirits. [25]
弱其志，和柔謙讓，不處權也。
“Softens the will”
Harmonious and soft, humble, modest, and accommodating, the Sage does not linger in positions of authority.
強其骨。愛精重施，髓滿骨堅。
“And strengthens the bones”
He cherishes his vital essence and takes seriously what was bestowed upon him (by Heaven, Earth, and his parents). Thus, his bone marrow is full, and his bones are strong.
常使民無知無欲。返樸守淳。
“People then remain uncontrived and without desires”
They return to the unaltered state (by) guarding simplicity within.
使夫知者不敢為也。思慮深，不輕言。
“While the scheming do not dare to act”
They become concerned and think deeply. They do not speak carelessly.

為無為，不造作，動因循。
“Act by not acting”
Do not create more work. Move when there is reason to do so.
則無不治。德化厚，百姓安。
“And everything will fall into place”
Virtue will bring about great transformation, and all people will become peaceful.

THREE

While chapter two cautions against enticing others to praise oneself, as this invites competition and jealousy, chapter three cautions against enticing people to envy and compete with each other. Leaders often instigate a competitive atmosphere in an attempt to increase the output of their group, but too often this is done by manipulating the base desires of people to fear and conquer each other. This results in an unmanageable situation where the common unity dissolves and a leader must then lead many competing factions, rather than a single functioning organism.

An intriguing correlation to Chinese medicine and Daoist internal alchemy is notably present in Lao Zi’s description of emptying the mind, enriching the stomach, softening the will, and strengthening the bones. Guan Zi’s *Art of the Heart-Mind* texts explain that to clear the mind is to return to intent, as intent precedes thought.[26] Intent (yi) is also related to the stomach as intent is said to be housed in the spleen. In Daoist meditation, while emptying the heart-mind, intent is focused on the lower dantien – the gravitational center of the body’s energy – located just below the navel. Doing so nourishes the basic energy of life. This gravitational center is associated with the “life gate” (ming men) located behind the kidneys, and the kidneys themselves, which are said in Chinese medicine to house the will (zhi) and nourish the bones. So, by emptying the mind, enriching the lower dantien, and not taxing the kidneys by overuse of the will, the kidneys can in turn strengthen the bones. Thereby, one “empties the mind, enriches the stomach, softens the will, and strengthens the bones.” While Lao Zi may or may not have known about these connections, [27] their application is no less evident in his theory of governing the nation and, ostensibly, the body.

~ 4 ~

Dao is a container
Though used again and again
It is never full
Profound! As though the ancestor of all things
Rounding the points
Untying the knots
Softening the glare
Unifying the dust

Tranquil! As though having a life of its own
I do not know whose child it is
It appears to have preceded the primordial ruler

Chapter Four
無源 Without Origin

道沖而用之，沖，中也。道匿名藏譽，其用在中
“Dao is a container. Though used”
“A container”[28] means that it is “within.” Dao hides its name and conceals its fame. Its use is found within.
或不盈，或，常也。道常謙虛不盈滿。
“Again and again, it is never full
“Again,” here, means “always.” Dao is always humble and empty, and never full or self-satisfied.
淵乎似萬物之宗。道淵深不可知，似為萬物知宗祖。
“Profound! As though the ancestor of all things”
Dao is so deep that its depths cannot be known. (Trying to know it) is like the myriad things trying to know their first ancestors.
挫其銳，銳，進也。人欲銳精進取功名，當挫止之，法道不自見也。
“Rounding the points”
“Points” refer to pushing forward. People wish to direct their vital essence towards receiving merit and fame. They should dull this (desire) until it has stopped, and follow the example of Dao by not displaying themselves.
解其紛，紛，結恨也。當念道無為以解釋。

“Untying the knots”
“The knots” refers to knots of hatred. Giving your thoughts to the effortlessness of Dao, untie and release them.
和其光，言雖有獨見之明，當知闇昧，不當以擢亂人也。
“Softening the glare”
Lao Zi is saying that if you are the only person who sees with brilliant and illuminated vision, you should obscure your knowledge and not draw others into confusion.[29]
同其塵。當與眾庶同垢塵，不當自別殊。
“Unifying the dust”
You should associate with the multitudes in the same dirt and dust. You should not separate and differentiate yourself from them.

湛兮似若存。言當湛然安靜，故能長存不亡。
“Tranquil! As though having a life of its own”
This is to say that you should find tranquility and stillness at the depths of your nature. Then you will be able to endure and not die.
吾不知誰之子，老子言：我不知，道所從生。
“I do not know whose child it is”
Lao Zi is saying: “I do not know from whom or what the Dao was born.”
象帝之先。道自在天帝之前，此言道乃先天地之生也。至今在者，以能安靜湛然，不勞煩欲使人修身法道。
“It appears to have preceded the primordial ruler”
Dao existed before Heaven’s first ruler. This means that Dao was born before Heaven and Earth. To arrive at Dao today, people can simply find the tranquility and stillness residing in the depths of their nature. When not beckoned by the calls of desire, they can cultivate themselves and follow the example of Dao.

FOUR
In chapter four, Heshang Gong explains that ‘Dao as a container’ is a metaphor for humility. Dao is the empty vessel which can never be overfilled. It can accomplish all things, provide all things, and create all things, yet it never shows itself and never seeks recognition. People, on the other hand, are filled up quite quickly, brimming over with their accomplishments and seeking to show how full they have become. The Sage, like the Dao, remains empty. For in doing so, they remain unlimited in capacity.

~ 5 ~

Heaven and Earth are not (willfully) benevolent
The myriad things are treated no differently
Than grass for dogs
Sages are not (willfully) benevolent
The hundred clans are treated no differently
Than grass for dogs

The gate of Heaven and Earth
Is it not like a bagpipe?
Empty yet not finished
It moves, and again more is pushed forth

To speak countless words is worthless
This is not as good as guarding balance within

Chapter Five
虛用 Utilizing Emptiness

天地不仁，天施地化，不以仁恩，任自然也。
“Heaven and Earth are not (willfully) benevolent”[30]
Heaven bestows, and Earth transforms. It is not because of benevolence or mercy that they do this, but simply because it is in their nature (zi ran)
以萬物為芻狗。天地生萬物，人最為貴，天地視之如芻草狗畜，不貴望其報也。
“The myriad things are treated no differently than grass for dogs”
Heaven and Earth gave birth to the myriad things. People are highly valued, (yet) Heaven and Earth see them as they see grass and straw (for) dogs and farm animals. Heaven and Earth do not value people with expectations of being treated the same way in response.
聖人不仁，聖人愛養萬民，不以仁恩，法天地行自然。
“Sages are not (willfully) benevolent"
Sages love and take care of the myriad people. It is not because of benevolence or mercy that they do so, but because they follow the example of Heaven and Earth and act according to natural spontaneity.

以百姓為芻狗。聖人視百姓如芻草狗畜，不貴望其禮意。
“The hundred clans are treated no differently than grass for dogs”
Sages see the hundred clans as they see grass and straw for dogs and farm animals. They do not honour people with any expectation of reciprocal courtesy in their minds.

天地之間，天地之間空虛，和氣流行，故萬物自生。人能除情欲，節滋味，清五臟，則神明居之也。
“The gate of Heaven and Earth”
The gate of Heaven and Earth is hollow and empty. Harmonious energy-breath flows forth from it. Thus, the myriad things arise spontaneously. By eliminating desires and strong emotions, and abstaining from ingesting too many flavours, the five organs will be purified. Spiritual intelligence will then remain.
其猶橐籥乎。橐籥中空虛，人能有聲氣。
“Is it not like a bagpipe?”
The center of a bagpipe[31] is hollow and empty, yet people can obtain musical energy from it.
虛而不屈，動而愈出。言空虛無有屈竭時，動搖之，益出聲氣也。
“Empty yet not finished. It moves, and again more is pushed forth”
This means that, though hollow and empty, it has not been exhausted. By moving it back and forth, more musical energy comes out of it.

多言數窮，多事害神，多言害身，口開舌舉，必有禍患。
“To speak countless words is worthless”
Having too many duties harms the spirit. Speaking too many words does harm to oneself. When the mouth is open and the tongue cleaves to the roof of the mouth, there is sure to be misfortune and worries.
不如守中。不如守德於中，育養精神，愛氣希言。
“This is not as good as guarding balance within”
It is not as good as guarding De within. Nurture and support your spiritual vitality, cherish your energy-breath, and speak infrequently.[32]

FIVE
In chapter five, Heshang Gong continues to illustrate the natural self-reliance of Heaven and the Sage. Benevolence is often thought of as an act requiring self-sacrifice and willpower, but for Heaven and the Sage, it is simply a genuine expression of their pure

nature. They are not humane and kind out of duty and social expectations, and they do not feel the need to parade such behaviours about in debates about proper conduct and courtesies. Being of good service to others does not require a convincing motivation for Heaven or the Sage, so they find little reason to spend time explaining it.

A great deal of confusion has persisted in regards to the seeming meaning of the first lines of chapter five: “Heaven is not benevolent; it treats all people as sacrificial straw dogs.” [33] In summary, benevolence (ren) formerly suggested a hierarchy of disciplined care and concern, beginning with one’s closest relatives and eventually reaching to strangers. So “not benevolent” here actually suggested “impartial.” Thanks to an anecdote by the great Daoist writer Zhuang Zi (Chuang Tzu), sacrificial straw dogs are known to have been discarded and trampled on by those leaving the sacrificial ceremony; however, Zhuang Zi also describes how they were treated with the utmost care and attention before and during the ceremony, when they were presented as offerings to Heaven. It is this care and attention, treating *all* people as sacred, that Lao Zi seems more likely to have meant in this chapter.

A similar treatment to that of the straw dogs can be found in practices of Daoist and folk herbalism, where prayers and intentions will be infused into the medicine. When the medicinal properties have been absorbed, the dregs will be thrown onto the road “thus symbolically casting the disease out of the house, there to be crushed by the wheels of passing buses and trucks.”[34] The end treatment of the medicine is, of course, not the ultimate reflection of how these herbs are used. Prayers and intentions are infused into the medicine in hopes that they will bring peace and harmony to the patient, much as the prayers and intentions infused into the straw dogs were believed to foster peace and harmony in Heaven, and consequently on Earth and amongst Humanity. We may take from this that the Sage, therefore, does not simply tell people how to act and how to care for those closest to him, but puts his best attention and intention to all people, as though they were the mediums through which he would communicate his love and reverence for De and Dao. One might say that when proven devoid of any virtue, people would be considered as potentially disease carrying rubbish; however, this would seem in great contradiction to chapter 27:

> … the wise of unrelenting virtue rescue people
> Therefore nobody is abandoned
> Unrelenting virtue saves things
> Therefore nothing is abandoned
> This is called “capturing light”
> Therefore, those who are excellent
> Are models for those who are not excellent
> Those who are not excellent
> Are valued as assets by those who are excellent
> Those who do not value their teachers
> Those who do not care for their assets
> To consider these people wise would be a great illusion…

For a more extensive analysis of chapter five, please see in the appendix below: “Straw-Dogs and Benevolence in Chapter Five of the Dao De Jing.”

~ 6 ~

Be a valley to the spirit and you will not die
This is called the Fathomlessness of the Female
The gate to the Fathomlessness of the Female
Is called the Root of Heaven and Earth
Soft and gentle
This is her way of existence
Do not draw on her use laboriously

Chapter Six
成象 Formation and Image

谷神不死，谷，養也。人能養神則不死也。神，謂五臟之神也。肝藏魂，肺藏魄，心藏神，腎藏精，脾藏志，五藏盡傷，則五神去矣。
“Be a valley to the spirit and you will not die”
A valley is nourishing. People have the power to nourish the spirit and not die. “Spirit” refers to the five organ spirits. The liver hides the ethereal (hun) spirit; the lungs hide the corporeal (po) spirit; the heart hides the mind (shen) spirit; the kidneys and sexual organs hide the essence (jing) spirit; and the spleen hides the will (zhi) spirit.[35] If these five hidden spirits are exhausted and injured, they will leave.
是謂玄牝。言不死之有，在於玄牝。玄，天也，於人為鼻。牝，地也，於人為口。天食人以五氣，從鼻入藏於心。五氣輕微，為精、神、聰、明、音聲五性。其鬼曰魂，魂者雄也，主出入於人鼻，與天通，故鼻為玄也。地食人以五味，從口入藏於胃。五味濁辱，為形、骸、骨、肉、血、脈六情。其鬼曰魄，魄者雌也，主出入於人口，與地通，故口為牝也。
“This is called the Fathomlessness of the Female”
What cannot die are the Fathomless and the Female. The Fathomless is of Heaven. In people, this is the nose. The Female is of the Earth. In people, this is the mouth.

Heaven feeds people with the five energy-breaths. They go in through the nose, and are stored in the heart. The five energy-breaths are refined to make the vital essence, shen-spirit, intelligence, clear vision, vocal

expression, and the five intrinsic natures.[36] Their entity is the ethereal spirit (hun). This entity is male. It controls the outflow and inflow of a person's nose so that Heaven can pass through them. Thus, the nose is the Fathomless.

Earth feeds people with the five flavours. They go in through the mouth and are stored in the stomach. The five flavours are mixed and compacted to create the form, the bones, the skeletal framework, the muscles, the blood, the blood channels, and the six emotions.[37] Their entity is the corporeal spirit (po). This entity is female. It controls the outflow and inflow of a person's mouth, so that Earth can pass through them. Thus, the mouth is the Female.

玄牝之門，是謂天地根。根，元也。言鼻口之門，是乃通天地之元氣所從往來也。

"The gate to the Fathomlessness of the Female is called The Root of Heaven and Earth"

The root is the origin. This means that the original energy-breaths (yuan qi) of Heaven and Earth are sent out and drawn in through the gates of the nose and the mouth.

綿綿若存，鼻口呼噏喘息，當綿綿微妙，若可存，復若無有。

"Soft and gentle. This is her way of existence"

The nose and mouth exhale and inhale, breathe in deeply and let the breath out slowly. (The breath) should be soft and gentle, unnoticeable and subtle, returning to be as though not there.

用之不勤。用氣當寬舒，不當急疾懃勞也。

"Do not draw on her use laboriously"

Use of the breath should be wide, spacious, open, stretched, easy, and comfortable. It should not be quick and urgent, difficult, overzealous, or laborious.

SIX

As Heshang Gong shows in chapter six, Daoist strategies for harmonious living are not simply meant to avoid calamity, but also to nourish divine essence – spirit – and thereby improve wellbeing on every level of our existence. What connects us to the original qi of Heaven and Earth, according to Heshang Gong, is our nose and mouth which allow us to ingest this qi and transform it into divine essence (spirit), manifested in our character and body as virtue and health. While many of the early Chinese philosophers discussed the true meanings and cultivation of benevolence, propriety, trustworthiness, loyalty, and wisdom, Heshang Gong taught the benefits of mindful breathing, ingesting the yuan qi of Heaven

and Earth, and thereby nourishing the internal organs and their positive expressions of health. These positive expressions of health could be simply described as “feeling good.” By feeling good, we will find benevolence, propriety, trustworthiness, loyalty, and wisdom a more natural part of our nature. This feeling good begins with the breath, for by our very own nose and mouth we can breathe in the original breath (yuan qi) of Heaven and Earth (天地之元氣), the subtle nutrients producing the inception of all life on Earth.

On the topic of breath, it may be helpful to look at the role of the lungs according to ancient Chinese medical theory. In the earliest Chinese canon of medicine, the *Yellow Emperor’s Classic of Internal Medicine*, Plain Questions (*Nei Jing*, Su Wen), chapter eight, the lungs are described as the prime minister and grand tutor to the emperor (the heart) bringing “order and moderation.” At the level of emotion and consciousness, the role of the lungs can be illustrated with a number of intriguing correlations in five elemental phase theory, as shown in the following reasoning:

The metal phase, pertaining to the lungs, is “dominated/corrected” by the fire phase (fire is the grand-parent of metal), with fire pertaining to the heart-mind. Note that the lungs are the only internal organs we can easily control with our minds. Thus, the heart-mind-emperor can use the lungs-prime-minister to direct the other internal organ-officials. One of the most precarious officials in a polity can be the general who holds sway over the army. In the nation-body metaphor of the *Nei Jing*, this is the liver, pertaining to the wood phase and the emotion of anger. The metal phase of the lungs, however, dominates the wood phase. Similarly, if one finds themselves overcome by anger, the best way to overcome this rising energy is to breathe deeply so that the lungs massage the liver, moderating and bringing order to this insurgence.

Another relationship to consider here is that between the lungs and the kidneys – the kidneys pertaining to water phase and the emotion of fear. The water phase draws from the metal phase (metal is the parent of water), and can thereby weaken it, much as fear can stop us from breathing properly, even causing hyperventilation.

On the other side of the metal phase is the earth phase, pertaining to the spleen,[38] which gives birth to and nourishes the metal phase (earth is the parent of metal). Note that cultivating the calm stillness of the earth will restore deep and bountiful breathing. With this calm stillness, we give rise to the ingestion of Heavenly qi in our lungs, associated with the flexibility of the metal phase. It would appear similarly relevant, within this circle of five phases, that in the eight natural powers of Feng Shui (Water, Mountain, Thunder, Wind, Fire, Earth, Lake, and Heaven), Heaven is also associated with the metal phase. Thus, in the lungs and spleen, paired in the “tai yin” meridian system of acupuncture, we find the interactions of Heaven and Earth taking place in our very own bodies.

~ 7~

Heaven has longevity, Earth has continuity
Heaven and Earth have the power of longevity and continuity because they do not live for themselves
This is how they can live for so long

Therefore, sages leave themselves behind
And they end up in front
They do not cater to themselves
Yet they persist

Is it not because they are without selfishness and wickedness
That they are able to fulfill themselves?

Chapter Seven
韜光 Sheathing Light

天長地久，說天地長生久壽，以喻教人也。
“Heaven has longevity, Earth has continuity”
Heaven and Earth live for a long time, and are thus used as an example to instruct people.
天地所以能長且久者，以其不自生，天地所以獨長且久者，以其安靜，施不求報，不如人居處，汲汲求自饒之利，奪人以自與也。
“Heaven and Earth have the power of longevity and continuity because they do not live for themselves”
Heaven and Earth continue to exist because they are peaceful and gentle. They give and do not seek reciprocation. This is not how people live. People draw and draw (from the world), and seek abundant profit for themselves. They take from others and give to themselves.
故能長生。以其不求生，故能長生不終也。
“This is how they can live for so long”
Because they do not seek after life, they can extend their lives endlessly.

是以聖人後其身，先人而後己也。
“Therefore, sages leave themselves behind”

They put others first, and themselves behind.
而身先，天下敬之，先以為長。
“And end up in front”
The world respects them, and they lead by having endured the longest.
外其身，薄己而厚人也。
“They do not cater to themselves”
They do without, and enhance others.
而身存。百姓愛之如父母，神明祐之若赤子，故身常存。
“Yet they persist”
All people love them like their own mothers and fathers. The spiritual lights (shen ming)[39] protect them like a newborn child. Thus, they always remain.

非以其無私邪。聖人為人所愛，神明所祐，非以其公正無私所致乎。
“Is it not because they are without selfishness and wickedness”
Sages act with love towards people and are protected by the spiritual lights. Is this not because they are fair, upright, and without selfishness?
故能成其私。人以為私者，欲以厚己也。聖人無私而己自厚，故能成其私也。
“That they are able to fulfill themselves?”
People who act with selfishness wish to enhance themselves. Sages are without selfishness, yet they enhance themselves. As a result, they are able to fulfill themselves.

SEVEN

Seeking only to benefit oneself, people lose their connection to the source of benefit, be that their connection to Dao, or their connection to others. People thrive in harmonious communities where they can grow as individuals and secure livelihoods by fulfilling a role as part of the interconnected organism of society. Seeking only to serve oneself in the inescapable circumstances of human society leaves a person disconnected from the greater good and, according to ancient Chinese thought, offends the higher spiritual powers that can put them on the path of success or failure.

~ 8 ~

The highest excellence is like water
The excellence of water benefits all things
And does not fight against them
It dwells in the places that people detest
How close it is to Dao!

Such excellence in dwelling can be found in the Earth
Such excellence in the heart can be found in its depths
Such excellence in giving can be found in benevolence
Such excellence in speech can be found in sincerity
Such excellence in alignment can be found in order
Such excellence in professionalism can be found in competence
Such excellence in action can be found in appropriate timing

Simply because it does not fight
(Water) has no enemy

Chapter Eight
易性 The True Nature of Ease

上善若水。上善之人，如水之性。
“The highest excellence is like water”
People of highest excellence resemble the nature of water.
水善利萬物而不爭，水在天為霧露，在地為源泉也。
“The excellence of water benefits all things, and does not fight against them”
Water exists in the sky as mist and dew, and in the earth as springs.
處眾人之所惡，眾人惡卑濕垢濁，水獨靜流居之也。
“It dwells in the places that people detest”
The people all detest places that are low, damp, dirty, and muddy. Only water quietly circulates and lives there.
故幾於道。水性幾於道同。
“How close it is to Dao!”
The nature of water is similar to Dao.

居善地，水性善喜於地，草木之上即流而下，有似於牝動而下人也。
“Such excellence in dwelling can be found in the earth”
The nature of water excels in loving the earth. Plants and trees immediately spring up when it flows down to them. It resembles how females put themselves below males.
心善淵，水深空虛，淵深清明。
“Such excellence in the heart can be found in its depths”
At the depths of water there is emptiness. Its depths are pure and clear.
與善仁，萬物得水以生。與虛不與盈也。
“Such excellence in giving can be found in benevolence”
The myriad things obtain water for life. It gives where there is emptiness and not where there is fullness.
言善信，水內影照形，不失其情也。
“Such excellence in speech can be found in sincerity”
Water shows the reflections and shadows of forms but does not lose its temperament.
正善治，無有不洗，清且平也。
“Such excellence in alignment can be found in order”
Everything it cleans becomes pure and peaceful.
事善能，能方能圓，曲直隨形。
“Such excellence in professionalism can be found in competence”
It can be square, it can be circular, it can be bent, and it can be straight. It can follow any form.
動善時。夏散冬凝，應期而動，不失天時。
“Such excellence in action can be found in appropriate timing”
In summer it disperses; in winter it freezes. It abides by the time when going into action; it does not neglect Heaven’s schedule.

夫唯不爭，壅之則止，決之則流，聽從人也。
“Simply because it does not fight”
Stop it and it halts; direct it and it flows. It complies with people.
故無尤。水性如是，故天下無有怨尤水者也。
“(Water) has no enemy”
Because the nature of water is like this, there is nothing in the world which has any hatred or enmity towards it.

EIGHT

Like qi reaching the lungs, water reaches the shore and rolls over its banks, effortlessly pushing and pulling sediment back into the ocean, washing everything it touches, and nourishing every cell. It does not fight, it does not force, it does not resist, nor can it be fought, forced, or resisted.

As Heshang Gong points out, "*The people all detest places that are low, damp, dirty, and muddy. Only water quietly circulates and lives there.*" Like water, "people of highest excellence" effortlessly take the position of humility and reach out to those in the humblest of situations. They do not exalt themselves above others but naturally find their place as close to the earth as possible. They may in truth rise up to the clouds, but they never make a show of it, and soon find their way back to the lower or supporting roles, even if they in fact lead from beneath.

Another image in water's reflection of virtue is that people of highest excellence, or "utmost goodness," like water, will flow and break and fall as they travel through life without losing their intrinsic nature. As the kidneys are associated with both water phase and courage,[40] courage is this ability to try and fall and get back up. Courage is not stuck in the fear of change and of the unknown; it adapts and accepts even the low muddy ruts. It is without fear of losing the shape of its ego, for this shape is but a movement of its intrinsic nature. This intrinsic nature is what water keeps intact at all times, not the transitory shapes that it takes on in the course of life's myriad channels. Further, like the Sage, water does not dwell on itself, and so its shan (善 , goodness, skill, excellence) never diminishes.

In describing the excellence of water, Lao Zi describes excellence in human character:
Grounded: Water always flows downwards, into the ground, the center, the earth. Those with virtue like water persistently gravitate to being grounded, and finding the center within.

Depth: A heart with immeasurable depth has immeasurable patience, empathy, and love.

Benevolence: It is the nature of water to selflessly benefit others. As such, it is beneficial to all, without discrimination.

Sincerity: With water, you always get water. It does not use artifice, deceit, and flattery. It is always completely water, and reliably acts as such.

Order: Water always returns to being level and even. It fills what is low and washes down what is high, while feeding life all around it. As such it is like good government.

Competence: A highly competent professional can handle all situations of their profession. While things may temporarily obstruct them, it is only a matter of time until they adapt to

changing situations. In the same way, water fits any cup, flows down every channel, and adapts to every change.

Timing: Good timing depends on taking action when opportunity presents itself. Water does not hesitate. It always flows in accordance with the stream, and reaches its destination.

~ 9 ~

To take hold and continue filling
Is not as good as coming to a stop
If you obsessively refine a spear
It will not be long enough to protect you
If gold and jade fill the court
Nothing can hold onto them
When fortune and wealth bring arrogance
They bring the misfortune of their own loss

When achievements are completed
Their recognition should continue
But the individual should withdraw
This is the way of Heaven

Chapter Nine
運夷 Fortune Through Evenness

持而盈之，不如其已。盈，滿也。已，止也。持滿必傾，不如止也。
“To take hold and continue filling is not as good as coming to a stop”
What is continually filled becomes full. To come to a stop means to desist. To hold something and continue filling it ensures that it will overflow. This is not as good as stopping ahead of time.
揣而梲之，不可長保。揣，治也。先揣之，後必棄捐。
“If you obsessively refine a spear,[41] it will not be long enough to protect you”
This obsessive refining refers to governing. If (the spear or nation) is obsessively refined, it will later be discarded.
金玉滿堂，莫之能守。嗜欲傷神，財多累身。
“If gold and jade fill the court, nothing can hold onto them”
A weakness towards desires injures the spirit. Abundant valuables cause worry for a person.
富貴而驕，自遺其咎。夫富當賑貧，貴當憐賤，而反驕恣，必被禍患也。

“When fortune and wealth bring arrogance, they bring the misfortune of their own loss”
The rich should help the poor and the noble should sympathize with the abject. They should not become proud and indulgent. Otherwise, they will surely be met with suffering and misfortune.

功成、名遂、身退，天之道。言人所為，功成事立，名跡稱遂，不退身避位，則遇於害，此乃天之常道也。譬如日中則移，月滿則虧，物盛則衰，樂極則哀。
“When achievements are completed, their recognition should continue, but the individual should withdraw. This is the Way of Heaven”
This refers to when people accomplish things while serving the throne. When they seek fame and renown, and do not step back so as to avoid vying for the throne, they bring great danger to themselves. This is brought about by Heaven’s enduring Dao. For example, when the sun reaches its height at mid-day, it then moves downwards. When the moon reaches fullness, it then diminishes its light. Things flourish and then decline again. Music reaches its climax, and then becomes nostalgic.

NINE

Once optimal sharpness has been reached, to continue sharpening will only reduce the implement itself. Trying to do the right thing, trying not to do the wrong thing, there is a point at which one must recognize that they can simply do by not-doing. Removing the drive to do right and avoid doing wrong, one can learn to forget these efforts and follow the effortless course of Dao. As Heshang Gong shows, this principle applies to talents and abilities, as well as any efforts to appear talented or worthy.

~ 10 ~

Guard the fortress of your bodily spirits
Embrace Oneness
Can you do this without letting them flee?
Gather together the energy-breath and become soft
This is the power of an infant

Looking deeply
Purify and eliminate
Can you be without flaw?
Caring for the people and governing the nation
Can you be without effort?
Heaven's gate opens and closes
Can you act the part of the female?
With your awareness shining on every corner
Can you be without knowledge?

Giving them life and cultivating them
Giving them life yet not possessing them
Acting for them yet not expecting of them
Leading them forward but not managing them
This is called Fathomless Virtue

Chapter 10
能為 Potential and Action

載營魄，營魄，魂魄也。人載魂魄之上得以生，當愛養之。喜怒亡魂，卒驚傷魄。魂在肝，魄在肺。美酒甘肴，腐人肝肺。故魂靜志道不亂，魄安得壽延年也。

"Guard the fortress of your bodily (po) spirits"

The fortress of bodily spirits refers to one's ethereal spirits (hun) and bodily spirits (po). People carry their ethereal and bodily spirits in order to live. They should cherish them.

Over-excitement and anger kills the ethereal spirits; over-exertion and fear injure the bodily spirits. The ethereal spirits are in the liver; the bodily spirits are in the lungs. Those who enjoy alcohol and delicacies suffer

deterioration of the liver and lungs. When the ethereal spirits are tranquil and focused on Dao, there is no confusion; when the bodily spirits are peaceful, one obtains old age and delays the aging process.
抱一，能無離乎，言人能抱一，使不離於身，則長存。一者，道始所生，太和之精氣也。故曰：一布名於天下，天得一以清，地得一以寧，侯王得一以為正平，入為心，出為行，布施為德，摠名為一。一之為言，志一無二也。
“Embrace Oneness. Can you do this without letting them flee?”[42]
People who can embrace Oneness, and not let it leave them, extend their lives. In Oneness, Dao began to situate life by the supreme harmony of the vital energy-breaths.[43] Therefore it is said: “Oneness covered the world with names.”

Heaven attained Oneness and became clear. Earth attained Oneness and became serene. Lords and kings attained Oneness and became upright and peace-loving. Going within, it is mind; going outwards it is actions; in covering all with its blessing, it is Virtue. All the names together are One. Referring to Oneness, it is said: “In a unified consciousness, there is no division (or doubt).”[44]
專氣致柔，專守精氣使不亂，則形體能應之而柔順。
“Gather together the energy-breath and become soft”
Gather and embrace the vital energy-breaths within. Then they will not be chaotic and the body will become soft and pliant.
能嬰兒。能如嬰兒內無思慮，外無政事，則精神不去也。
“This is the power of an infant”
Have the power of an infant. Be, internally, without a thought or worry, and externally, without official duties. Then the spiritual vitality will not leave.

滌除玄覽，當洗其心，使潔淨也。心居玄冥之處，覽知萬事，故謂之玄覽也。
“Looking deeply, purify and eliminate”
One should wash the heart-mind until it is clean and pure. The heart-mind lives in the fathomless depths of emptiness. Investigate. Know its myriad engagements. This is called “investigating the fathomless.”
能無疵。不淫邪也，淨能無疵病乎。
“Can you be without flaw?”
Do not be licentious or evil. When purified, one can be without flaw or sickness.

愛民治國，治身者，愛氣則身全；治國者，愛民則國安。
“Caring for the people and governing the nation”
Those who govern the body cherish energy-breath and their bodies are thereby maintained. Those who govern the nation cherish the people and the nation is thereby stable and peaceful.
能無為。治身者呼吸精氣，無令耳聞；治國者，佈施惠德，無令下知也。
“Can you be without effort?”
Those who govern the body breathe out, and breathe in vital energy-breath without commanding their ears to hear it. Those who govern the nation share kindness and Virtue without commanding those below to know about it.
天門開闔，天門謂北極紫微宮。開闔謂終始五際也。治身：天門謂鼻孔,開謂喘,息闔,謂呼吸也
“Heaven’s gate opens and closes”
“Heaven’s gate” refers to the Purple Point Palace near the North Star. Opening and closing, here, refers to the ending and beginning of the five directions.[45]

In regards to governing the body: Heaven’s gate corresponds to the nostrils. To take in a deep breath is “opening.” To rest after this is “closing.” This refers to exhalation and inhalation.
能為雌。治身當如雌牝，安靜柔弱，治國應變，合而不唱也。
“Can you act the part of the female?”
Those who govern the body should be like a female (bird on its nest eggs) – peaceful, still, soft, and gentle. Those who govern the nation should adapt to changes and unite (with the people), rather than sing songs (of conquest and try to appear dominant like the male bird).
明白四達，言達明白，如日月四通，滿於天下八極之外。故曰：視之不見，聽之不聞，彰布之於十方，煥煥煌煌也。
“With your awareness shining on every corner”
Pure awareness is like the sun and moon which shine on every corner of the world. They fill the eight directions to the utmost distance. This is called “observing without seeing, and listening without hearing.” Their presence covers the ten directions in luminous brilliance.
能無知。無有能知道滿於天下者。
“Can you be without knowledge?”
It is not possible to understand how Dao permeates the world.

生之、畜之。道生萬物而畜養之。
“Giving them life and cultivating them”
Dao gives birth to the myriad things, cultivates them, and supports them.

生而不有，道生萬物，無所取有。
“Giving them life yet not possessing them”
Dao gives birth to the myriad things but does not take ownership of them.
為而不恃，道所施為，不恃望其報也。
“Acting for them yet not expecting of them”
The Dao gives, yet does not seek any reciprocation.
長而不宰，道長養萬物，不宰割以為器用。
“Leading them forward but not managing them”
Dao leads the myriad things towards longevity; it supports them but does not decide where they must stop. It simply makes them into useful vessels.
是謂玄德。言道行德，玄冥不可得見，欲使人如道也。
“This is called Fathomless Virtue”
This is to say that Dao advances a Virtue which is unfathomable. One cannot obtain a glance of it and so should only desire to accord with Dao.

TEN

As Heshang Gong explains in chapter ten, it was through the supreme harmony of vital qi (太和之精氣) that Dao gave rise to all things. This vital essence unites all things, and is within all things. To embrace the supreme harmony of vital essence is to, as Lao Zi says, “embrace oneness” and thereby hold onto the yin spirits (po) that preserve our earthly bodies. To do this, according to Heshang Gong, we must be unified in our resolve – to be of one mind. As shown throughout Heshang Gong’s commentary, and other Classical Daoist literature,[46] desires will give rise to emotions and scatter the will. The term *zhi* means will and resolve, while also consciousness, and even *emotions* in early Chinese medical texts. When the *zhi* is unified, it is not divided up into emotions, and the consciousness holds to oneness.

~ 11 ~

Thirty spokes join together on one hub
Because the hub is empty
The cart can be used
The surrounding clay makes a pot
And by its emptiness
The pot is used
Door frames and windows are carved out to make a room
And in this emptiness
The room is used
So, substance is gained
And emptiness is used

Chapter 11
無用 Utilizing Nothingness

三十輻共一轂，古者車三十輻，法月數也。共一轂者，轂中有孔，故眾輻共湊之。治身者當除情去欲，使五藏空虛，神乃歸之。治國者寡能，摠眾弱共使強也。
“Thirty spokes join together on one hub”
The ancient carts had thirty spokes in each wheel, following the average of a lunar month. Together they form one wheel with a hole at the center where the spokes all come together.

When governing the body, one should eliminate strong emotions and abandon desires, so that the five organs are hollow and empty, and their spirits can return.

When governing a nation, a humble ruler can assemble the masses and, by their collective acquiescence, make a powerful nation.
當其無，有車之用。無，謂空虛。轂中空虛，輪得轉行，轠中空虛，人得載其上也。
“Because the hub is empty, the cart can be used”
Nothingness means hollowness and emptiness. Where the center of the wheel is hollow and empty, the wheel is able to turn and move forward. Where the carriage is empty, people can ride in it.
埏埴以為器，埏，和也。埴，土也。和土以為飲食之器。

“The surrounding clay makes a pot”
The periphery, here, refers to harmony. Clay is from the earth. By bringing a harmonious order to the clay, you can make a vessel to drink and eat from.
當其無，有器之用。器中空虛，故得有所盛受。
“And by its emptiness, the pot is used”
The vessel’s center is hollow and empty. Thus when something is obtained, there is a space to receive and be filled.
鑿戶牖以為室，謂作屋室。
“Door frames and windows are carved out to make a room”
This refers to building the rooms of a house.
當其無有室之用。言戶牖空虛，人得以出入觀視；室中空虛，人得以居處，是其用。
“And in this emptiness, the room is used”
Doors and windows are made hollow and empty so that people can enter, leave, and look out to see what is there. Rooms are made empty so that people can sit and live in them. This is how they are used.
故有之以為利，利，物也，利於形用。器中有物，室中有人，恐其屋破壞，腹中有神，畏其形亡也。
“So, substance is gained”
We gain things. Things which have form are useful. Within vessels, there are things. Within rooms, there are people who worry that the home will fall to ruin. Within the belly, there is a spirit which fears the form will die.
無之以為用。言虛空者乃可用盛受萬物，故曰虛無能制有形。道者空也。
“And emptiness is used”
That which is empty and hollow can be used. It can receive, and be filled with innumerable things. Thus, it is said: “Empty nothingness can establish the existence of forms.” Dao is this hollowness.

ELEVEN

According to the ancient Chinese, the heart holds the mind, and the body is inextricably affected by the heart-mind. When the mind and emotions are full, the physical body suffers, with certain emotions putting stress on particular organs. For example, anger burdens the liver, euphoria burdens the heart, excessive thinking burdens the spleen, sadness burdens the lungs, and fear burdens the kidneys. According to Daoist teachings, the root of emotion is craving, for emotions generally arise from either a fear of loss, the sadness of loss, thinking to avoid loss, the euphoria of attaining what one craves, or anger for not attaining what one craves. Thus, Heshang Gong explains in chapter 11: “When

governing the body, one should eliminate strong emotions and abandon desires, so that the five organs are hollow and empty, and their spirits can return."

Perhaps the best way to understand the organ-spirits is as the intrinsic intelligence of the organs. Their effortless mastery of role and function requires the continued fulfillment of their intrinsic, spontaneous, nature. When a person is disturbed by emotions, they may feel "not themselves," and exhibit dysfunctional behaviours as though their spirit has become occupied elsewhere. If they find the time to relax and move on from whatever inflamed their emotions, they will again feel "themselves" and respond to things from a more integrated, centered, and balanced mental-emotional state. Similarly, when the organs are burdened by emotions, they may not "act themselves," and as a result become dysfunctional. Alleviating the burden of emotions, they may once again function peacefully, harmoniously, and for the benefit of the whole organism. This, as Heshang Gong points out, is a fitting inference when Lao Zi says "Thirty spokes join together on one hub," referring to the empty center of the wheel. If the center was not empty, the cart's axle could not attach to it, and the cart could not move.

~ 12 ~

The five colours blind the eyes
The five tones deafen the ears
The five flavours numb the mouth
The intensity of the hunt
Makes the mind go mad
Goods which are difficult to obtain
Interfere with one's journey
Thus, sages are guided by their stomachs
And not by their eyes
Leaving that
They take this

Chapter 12
檢欲 Examining Desires

五色令人目盲；貪淫好色，則傷精失明也。
"The five colours blind the eyes"
Greed and lust for beautiful appearances cause injury to the vital essence and loss of brilliance.
五音令人耳聾；好聽五音，則和氣去心，不能聽無聲之聲。
"The five tones deafen the ears"
If one longs to hear the five notes, harmonious energy-breath leaves the heart and they cannot hear the sound of the soundless.
五味令人口爽；爽，亡也。人嗜於五味於口，則口亡，言失於道也。
"The five flavours numb the mouth"[47]
They excite and destroy it. People who have a weakness for the five flavours end up destroying their mouths. This is to say that they lose Dao.
馳騁畋獵，令人心發狂，人精神好安靜，馳騁呼吸，精神散亡，故發狂也。
"The intensity of the hunt makes the mind go mad"
People's spiritual vitality loves tranquility and stillness. Quickly breathing in and out in haste causes the spiritual vitality to scatter and die. A person then becomes insane.

難得之貨，令人行妨。妨，傷也。難得之貨，謂金銀珠玉，心貪意欲，不知饜足，則行傷身辱也
“Goods which are difficult to obtain interfere with one’s journey”
Interfere, here, means to injure. “Goods which are difficult to obtain” refers to gold, silver, precious stones, and jade. The heart-mind which is greedy, and thinks about what it desires does not know how to be content when it has enough. This causes one’s journey to suffer and their character to be insulted.
是以聖人為腹，守五性，去六情，節志氣，養神明。
“Thus, sages are guided by their stomachs”
By guarding the five intrinsic natures, abandoning the six emotions,[48] and uniting the energy-breath of the will,[49] spiritual intelligence is cultivated.
不為目，目不妄視，妄視泄精於外。
“And not by their eyes”
The eyes should not look frantically. Regarding frantically leaks out vital essence.
故去彼取此。去彼目之妄視，取此腹之養性。
“Leaving that, they take this”
They leave frantic looking, and take the cultivation of pure nature (xing) by way of the stomach.[50]

TWELVE

Following his comments in chapter 11 on the absence of desire and emotion, Heshang Gong explains that chapter 12 speaks to the consequences of desire and emotion. Seeking only what we crave, it is easy to miss the adequacy of what is available. Learning to “leave that and take this,” nearly everything can be appreciated for the deeper experience of life that it affords. Doing so, however, requires that we first become “empty,” and open to “this.”

~ 13 ~

Favour and disgrace are both startling
Appreciate the great worrying
That both of these cause in your body
What is meant by favour and disgrace?
To be disgraced is to be put down
Winning is startling
Losing is startling
This means that favour and disgrace are both startling

What does it mean to say "Appreciate the great worrying
That both of these cause in your body?"
The reason I have great worries is because I have a self
If I did not have a self, what worries would I have?

Therefore, those who make the world to be their own self
And value it as such
On them the world can rely
Those who make the world to be their own self
And care for it as such
To them the world can be entrusted

Chapter 13
厭恥 Detest and Humiliation

寵辱若驚，身寵亦驚，身辱亦驚 。
"Favour and disgrace are both startling"
When a person is favoured, they are startled. When they are disgraced, they are also startled.
貴大患若身。貴，畏也。若，至也。謂大患至身，故皆驚。
"Appreciate the great worrying that both of these cause in your body"
Appreciate, here, means fear. Cause, here, means bring. This means that great suffering is brought to the person, and so they should both be feared.
何謂寵辱。問何謂寵，何謂辱。寵者尊榮，辱者恥辱。及身還自問者，以曉人也。
"What is meant by favour and disgrace?"

What is favour? What is disgrace? To be favoured is to be respected and honoured. To be disgraced is to be shamed and humiliated. In regards to self (cultivation), one examines themselves when they are exposed to others.
辱為下，辱為下賤。
“To be disgraced is to be put down”
To be disgraced is to be lowered and devalued.
得之若驚，得寵榮驚者，處高位如臨深危也。貴不敢驕，富不敢奢。
“Winning is startling”
Obtaining favour and honour is startling. Maintaining high position is like constantly approaching dangerous depths. The honoured should never dare to be proud, and the rich should never dare to be extravagant.
失之若驚，失者，失寵處辱也。驚者，恐禍重來也。
“Losing is startling”
To lose, here, means to lose favour and be ashamed. Being startled, here, means to fear danger and concern oneself with its approach.
是謂寵辱若驚。解上得之若驚，失之若驚。
“This means that favour and disgrace are both startling”
Summarizing the above, to obtain them is startling and to lose them is startling.

何謂貴大患若身。復還自問：何故畏大患至身。
“What does it mean to say “appreciate the great worrying that both of these cause in your body?”
Going back to reflect on the question: “for what reason do fear and worry arrive in oneself?”
吾所以有大患者，為吾有身。吾所以有大患者，為吾有身。有身憂者，勤勞念其飢寒，觸情從欲，則遇禍患也。
“The reason I have great worries is because I have a self”
The reason I have great worries is because I have a self. Having a self causes one to have grief, to focus laboriously on thoughts about starving and freezing, to be stricken with strong emotions, and to be compelled by desires. This is how one approaches misfortune and worries.
及吾無身，吾何有患。使吾無有身體，得道自然，輕舉昇雲，出入無間，與道通神，當有何患。
“If I did not have a self, what worries would I have?”
If I did not have a body, I could obtain the natural spontaneity of Dao; I could be light enough to ascend peacefully into the clouds; I could leave

and enter without there being any opening; I could follow Dao's urgings to my spirit. What trouble, then, would I have?

故貴以身為天下者，則可寄天下，言人君貴其身而賤人，欲為天下主者，則可寄立，不可以久也
"Therefore, those who make the world to be their own self, and value it as such – on them the world can rely"
Lao Zi is saying that rulers who appreciate themselves, while not others, have the desire to be king of the world. Though they might take the throne, they cannot keep it for long.
愛以身為天下，若可託天下。言人君能愛其身，非為己也，乃欲為萬民之父母。以此得為天下主者，乃可以託其身於萬民之上，長無咎也。
"Those who make the world to be their own self, and care for it as such – to them the world can be entrusted"
Lao Zi is saying that rulers who are able to cherish themselves, but not act for themselves, will desire to be father and mother of the myriad people. As a result, they can obtain kingship of the world. They can be trusted to put the selves of the myriad people above their own, and so will lead without error.

THIRTEEN

Heshang Gong explains that being content with oneself, rather than envying the power, prestige, privilege, personality, or possessions of others, is indispensable to the Dao of Lao Zi. Such envy moves away from "this" in search of the ephemeral "that."[51] A moment of praise is startling to Lao Zi because it puts him at risk of placing himself above others, and causing him to look outside of himself for the contentment he has already found within. Thus, the final lines of chapter thirteen read, more literally, "When he values himself as he values the world, the world can rely on him. When he loves himself as he loves the world, the world can be entrusted to him." The world is endangered by leaders who are not able to find this value and love within themselves, for rarely will someone be able to truly value and love people they've never met if they have no value or love for themselves. These last lines also differentiate between valuing and loving (caring) because valuing something doesn't necessarily mean that we always take care of it. We may even harm it in an effort to possess it. Thus the Sage doesn't simply try to hold on to his or her body, but loves, cherishes, nourishes, and cares for it.

Paradoxically, to take care of the shen (身), simultaneously meaning *self*, *body*, and *character*, one must transcend it. Craving too many external things, one inevitably neglects themselves at their most basic levels, leading to the blind pursuit of wealth, glory, pride,

and pleasure in an attempt to assuage a deepening sense of lack or failure. As explained in chapter 72:

> Therefore, the Sage knows himself
> But does not display himself
> Loves and cares for himself
> But does not overestimate himself
> He abandons that and chooses this

The love, *ai*, that Lao Zi refers to here is compassionate, heartfelt, accepting, nurturing, forgiving, and beneficent. Such traits embody the Sage as much as those of modesty and equanimity; thus, holding such feelings towards oneself is as good a place to start as any. From this foundation, they may expand and grow in power until reaching those close to us, and in due time to the rest of humanity. As expressed in chapter 81: “Sages do not hoard. Having helped others, oneself gains more; having given to others, oneself continues to gain.” By dismantling our urges to dominate others, we can begin to shed the obfuscations of egotism.

~ 14 ~

By looking, it is not seen
It is known as Clear
By listening, it is not heard
It is known as Inaudible
What cannot be obtained when seized
Is known as Infinitesimal
These three things cannot be inspected
And are merged into one

Above, it is not bright
Below, it is not dark
Immeasurable and unnameable
It is again nothing
This is called “having no form or appearance”

Without a materialized image
This is called “absent-minded”
Greet it and you do not see its front
Follow it and you do not see its rear
Hold to the ancient Dao and ride it until you possess the present
Then you can know the ancient beginning
This is called “the thread of Dao”

Chapter 14
贊玄 Assistance from the Fathomless

視之不見名曰夷，無色曰夷。言一無采色，不可得視而見之。
“By looking, it is not seen. It is known as Clear.”
What is without colour and appearance is called Clear. This is to say that Oneness is without accumulated colour and appearance. It cannot be inspected or observed.
聽之不見名曰希，無聲曰希。言一無音聲，不可得聽而聞之。
“By listening, it is not heard. It is known as Inaudible.”
What is without sound is called Inaudible. This is to say that Oneness is without tone and pitch. It cannot be listened to or heard.

搏之不得名曰微。無形曰微。言一無形體，不可搏持而得之。
“What cannot be obtained when seized is known as Infinitesimal”
What is without form is called Infinitesimal. This is to say that Oneness is without form or body. It cannot be touched or held.
此三者不可致詰，三者，謂夷、希、微也。不可致詰者，夫無色、無聲、無形，口不能言，書不能傳，當受之以靜，求之以神，不可問詰而得之也。
“These three things cannot be inspected”
“These three” refers to the Clear, Inaudible, and Infinitesimal. It is not possible to inspect what has no colour or appearance, no sound, and no form; no mouth that can speak, nor a book which can transmit. You should receive it by stillness and seek it by the spirit. You cannot attain it through interrogation.
故混而為一。混，合也。故合於三名之為一。
“And are merged into one”
To be merged is to be combined. These three names are combined to make one.

其上不皦，言一在天上，不皦。皦，光明。
“Above, it is not bright”
Oneness in the Heavens is not bright. It is not bright, shining, or brilliant.
其下不昧。言一在天下，不昧。昧，有所闇冥。
“Below, it is not dark”
Oneness in the world is not dark. It is not dark, dismal, or gloomy.
繩繩不可名，繩繩者，動行無窮級也。不可名者，非一色也，不可以青黃白黑別，非一聲也，不可以宮商角徵羽聽，非一形也，不可以長短大小度之也。
“Immeasurable and unnameable”
What is immeasurable continues on without stopping. It cannot be named because it has not even a single colour; thus, it cannot be named blue, green, yellow, white, black, or any other colour. It has not even a single pitch, and so it cannot be named after (any of the five pitches) doh, ray, me, so, or la, which may be heard. It has not even a single form, and so cannot be named long, short, large, small, or any other measurement.
復歸於無物。物，質也。復當歸之於無質。
“It is again nothing”

“Nothing,” here, means without any substance. As it also returns, one should return to it in nothingness.
是謂無狀之狀，言一無形狀，而能為萬物作形狀也。
“This is called ‘having no form or appearance’”
Oneness is without any form or appearance, yet can cause the myriad things to take on their own forms and appearances.

無物之象，一無物質，而為萬物設形象也。
“Without a materialized image”
Oneness is without any materialized substance, yet it can cause the myriad things to display their own forms and images.
是謂惚恍。一忽忽恍恍者，若存若亡，不可見之也。
“This is called ‘absent-minded’”
Oneness is sudden, abrupt, and seemingly absent-minded. It is as though existing, and as though not existing. It cannot be seen.
迎之不見其首，一無端末，不可預待也。除情去欲，一自歸之也。
“Greet it and you do not see its front”
Oneness is without any end or beginning, so you cannot welcome it. Eliminate strong emotions and abandon desires. Oneness will then return of its own accord.
隨之不見其後，言一無影跡，不可得而看。
“Follow it and you do not see its rear”
Oneness has no tracks or shadows. It cannot be obtained by tracking it.
執古之道，以御今之有，聖人執守古道，生一以御物，知今當有一也。
“Hold to the ancient Dao and ride it until you possess the present”
Sages hold and embrace the ancient Dao which gave birth to Oneness and allowed them to commandeer things. Understand the present by holding onto Oneness.
能知古始，是謂道紀。人能知上古本始有一，是謂知道綱紀也 。
“Then you can know the ancient beginning. This is called the thread of Dao”
People are able to know the foundation and beginning of the highest antiquity by holding Oneness. This is called “knowing the thread of Dao.”

FOURTEEN

Just as health is forgotten when illness disappears, and shoes are forgotten when they are well fitting, we reside in the Oneness of non-differentiation when the harmony of Dao naturally returns. Likes and dislikes, distractions and uncertainty, anger, sadness, euphoria, anxiety, and fears, are all born of our ability or inability to attain the objects of our desires. While these experiences may eventually encourage us to find the harmony of Dao and reveal to us its importance, in their absence, Dao alights, though its very presence makes us unable to detect it. This limited capacity to express the notion of Dao may be hinted at in DDJ chapter one – "always without desires, observing its inner subtlety; always with desires, observing its outer surface."

As Heshang Gong shows in his last two comments on chapter 14, holding to this Oneness, we are able to become the active, rather than reactive, party in our own lives. The *Nei Ye* ("*Internal Cultivation*," c. 350 BC) also explains this role of Oneness as being the precursor to bringing about creation and change:

> With Oneness, things can be transformed. We call this spirit.
> With Oneness, situations can be changed. We call this wisdom.
> Transforming (things) without altering breath,
> Changing (situations) without altering wisdom:
> Only the junzi who maintains Oneness can do this.
> Holding Oneness and not losing it,
> They can preside over the myriad things.
> The junzi then conducts things,
> And is not conducted by things,
> (Having) attained the principle of Oneness.

~ 15 ~

Ancient and knowledgeable masters
The subtle mystery in them explored the fathomless
Unfathomably deep
They cannot be comprehended
So I will try to describe their appearances

Patient! As though crossing a stream in winter
Blending in! As though fearing neighbours from all directions
Respectful! As though guests in another's house
Flowing! Like thawed ice
Candid and sincere! Plain as wood
Broad and open! Like a valley
United! Like muddy water

Who, by the power of their stillness
Can make clouded water slowly become clear?
Who, by the power of their serenity
Can long sustain this progress until life slowly arises?
Those who maintain this Dao do not desire fullness
It is because they are not full that they can remain covered
And not let what is new come to an end

Chapter 15
顯德 Manifestions of Virtue

古之善為士者，謂得道之君也。
"Ancient and knowledgeable masters"
This refers to rulers who obtained Dao.
微妙玄通，玄，天也。言其志節玄妙，精與天通也。
"The subtle mystery in them explored the fathomless"
The fathomless, here, means "Heaven." Lao Zi is saying that their will joined with the fathomless mystery, and their vital essence followed the urgings of Heaven.
深不可識。道德深遠，不可識知，內視若盲，反聽若聾，莫知所長。
"Unfathomably deep"

Dao's Virtue is of such great depth that it is unknowable. To look for it within, one is as though blind. To listen back for it, one is as though deaf. Its length cannot be known.
夫唯不可識，故強為之容。謂下句也。
"They cannot be comprehended, so I will try to describe their appearances"
Referring to the following sentences.

與兮若冬涉川；舉事輒加重慎與。與兮若冬涉川，心難之也。
"Patient! As though crossing a stream in winter"
When taking up affairs, they took great caution. Patient! As though crossing a stream in winter, they were mindful of difficulty.
猶兮若畏四鄰；其進退猶猶如拘制，若人犯法，畏四鄰知之也。
"Blending in! As though fearing neighbours from all directions"
When advancing or retreating, they would blend in as though adhering to an established system, or like a person committing a crime who is afraid that his neighbours will find out.
儼兮其若客；如客畏主人，儼然無所造作也。
"Respectful! As though guests in another's house"
As though guests in the house of a fearsome and powerful person, they were naturally respectful and not obsequious.
渙兮若冰之將釋，渙者，解散。釋者，消亡。除情去欲，日以空虛。
"Flowing! Like thawed ice"
That which disperses (flows) is loosened and then scattered. When ice releases water, it melts away until completely gone. Remove strong emotions and abandon desires until there is emptiness and hollowness.
敦兮其若朴，敦者，質厚。朴者，形未分。內守精神，外無文采也。
"Candid and sincere! Plain as wood"
Those who are candid and sincere are of real substance; plain wood has a form which has not been altered. Internally, hold on to your spiritual vitality; externally, be without learned accumulations.
曠兮其若谷；曠者，寬大。谷者，空虛。不有德功名，無所不包也。
"Broad and open! Like a valley"
That which is broad is vast and open; a valley is empty and hollow – it does not have virtue, achievement, or fame, yet there is nothing it does not embrace.
渾兮其若濁。渾者，守本真，濁者，不照然。與眾合同，不自專也。
"United! Like muddy water"

That which is united embraces the foundation of reality. It is not the nature of muddy water to shine. (The ancient masters) associated with the masses and united as one with them. They were not concerned only with themselves.

孰能濁以靜之，徐清。孰，誰也。誰能知水之濁止而靜之，徐徐自清也。
“Who, by the power of their stillness, can make clouded water slowly become clear?”
Who can know how to make disturbed water stop and become still – to slowly and quietly clarify oneself?
孰能安以久動之，徐生。誰能安靜以久，徐徐以長生也。
“Who, by the power of their serenity, can long sustain this progress until life slowly arises?”
Who has the power to remain stable and clear – to slowly and calmly lengthen life?
保此道者，不欲盈。保此徐生之道，不欲奢泰盈溢。
“Those who maintain this Dao do not desire fullness”
Protecting this quiet calm is the Dao of (cultivating) life. Do not desire to be extravagant or exalted, to fill up and spill over.
夫惟不盈，故能蔽不新成。夫為不盈滿之人，能守蔽不為新成。蔽者，匿光榮也。新成者，貴功名。
“It is because they are not full that they can remain covered, and not let what is new come to an end”
Those who do not fill to overflowing can remain covered up and not let what is new come to an end. Those who conceal, hide their light from glory; those who do not let what is new come to an end, accomplish praiseworthy things without becoming famous.

FIFTEEN

The first adjective applied here to the ancient masters, Yu (與), generally has a grammatical function of showing compliance or connection between elements, with a more literal meaning of companionship. It appears to suggest, in this instance, that the sages were attentive and adaptive in their interactions with others, not rushing over them but rather being soft and accomodating. This is like unifying with the frozen stream and adapting to the exchange of pressure between one’s feet and the water under the ice. As

river ice is never very thick, one must be careful not to apply any pressure to the ice until they are sure it is safe. Such wisdom may also apply in precarious interpersonal situations.

Heshang Gong explains that the ancient masters (literally "the ancient scholar-gentlemen of excellence") did not display their skill and power. Like King Yu the Great (c. 2100 BC), who worked alongside his people to irrigate the land and transform the yearly floods into a blessing for the interior villages, these masters were able to overcome any sense of self-importance. Having conquered this shortcoming, so common in powerful leaders, few would even recognize their nobility.

Holding to Dao, desires eventually melt away (see Heshang Gong's comment on "Flowing! Like thawed ice"). In the same way that desires melt away, so must the assumed authority of ego. This refining and purifying eventually reveals the nameless pearl within, [52] and so these masters did not latch on to any such achievements or merits, even transcending attachment to namelessness when the need for a doctor, strategist, scholar, or king, arose.

The cleansing of self-importance is not only effective in spiritual-cultivation, but also supports one's physical-cultivation – two sides of the same coin for Daoists – as it allows one to process situations without becoming emotionally wrapped-up in egoic obsessions that disturb the jing-qi (vital energy-breaths) and jing-shen[53] (spiritual vitality). As Heshang Gong states in regards to *desiring fullness* (second-last line): "Protecting this quiet calm is the Dao of (cultivating) life. Do not desire to be extravagant or exalted, to fill up and spill over."

~ 16 ~

Arrive at supreme emptiness
Embrace deep silence
Myriad creatures arise together
I thereby observe them returning
So many things blossoming
And each returns back to its roots

Returning to the roots is called silence
This means returning to one's destiny-life-force (ming)
Returning to one's destiny-life-force is called eternality
Understanding eternality is called enlightenment
Oblivious to eternality, one is reckless
And author of their own misfortune

Know how to embrace eternality
This embrace shows the way of impartiality
The way of impartiality shows the way of a king
The way of a king shows the way of Heaven
The way of Heaven shows the way of Dao
The way of Dao shows the way of longevity
And for the body to be without peril

Chapter 16
歸根 Return to the Root

致虛極，得道之人，捐情去欲，五內清靜，至於虛極。
"Arrive at supreme emptiness"
Become a man of Dao. Give up strong emotions and discard desires. Then the five internal organs will be clear and tranquil, arriving at supreme emptiness.
守靜篤，守清靜，行篤厚 。
"Embrace deep silence"
Hold onto clarity and tranquility until it is deep and substantial.
萬物並作，作，生也。萬物並生也。
"Myriad creatures arise together"

Arise, here, means they are born. The myriad creatures are born side by side.
吾以觀復。言吾以觀見萬物無不皆歸其本也。人當念重其本也。
“I thereby observe them returning”
Lao Zi is saying “I watch and observe the myriad creatures, and there is not one which does not return to the root foundation.” People should consider the heaviness of the foundation.[54]
夫物芸芸，芸芸者，華葉盛也。
“So many things blossoming”
Blossoming refers to abundant flowers and leaves.
各復歸其根，言萬物無不枯落，各復反其根而更生也。
“And each returns back to its roots”
There is not one of the myriad things which does not dry out and fall. Each returns back to the root, and then many more are born.

歸根曰靜，靜謂根也。根安靜柔弱，謙卑處下，故不復死也。
“Returning to the roots is called silence”
Silence is another word for the root. The root is peaceful and still, soft and pliant. Modestly and humbly, it remains below. Thus, it does not return to death.
是謂復命。言安靜者是為復還性命，使不死也。
“This means returning to one’s destiny-life-force (ming)”
Lao Zi is saying that peace and stillness are the correct way to return to pure nature (xing) and the destiny-life-force (ming). Then one will not die.
復命曰常。復命使不死，乃道之所常行也。
“Returning to one’s destiny-life-force is called eternality”
By returning (to) the destiny-life-force, one will not die but will follow Dao eternally.
知常曰明；能知道之所常行，則為明。
“Understanding eternality is called enlightenment”
Knowing how to follow Dao at all times is to be enlightened.
不知常，妄作凶。不知道之所常行，妄作巧詐，則失神明，故凶也。
“Oblivious to eternality, one is reckless, and author of their own misfortune”
Not knowing how to follow Dao at all times, people recklessly work on developing deceptive skills. As a result, they lose spiritual intelligence. Disaster then befalls them.

知常容，能知道之所常行，去情忘欲，無所不包容也。
“Know how to embrace eternality”
Know how to follow Dao at all times. Leave strong emotions and forget desires. Then there will be nothing which is not wrapped in this embrace.
容乃公，無所不包容，則公正無私，眾邪莫當。
“This embrace shows the way of impartiality”[55]
When there is nothing which is not wrapped in this embrace, there is impartiality, uprightness, and unselfishness. No wickedness can obstruct it.
公乃王，公正無私，可以為天下王。治身正則形一，神明千萬，共湊其躬也。
“The way of impartiality shows the way of a king”
Impartial, honourable, and unselfish, one can become king of all under Heaven. By governing and aligning the body, form is unified. Countless spiritual lights then assemble in the body.
王乃天，能王，德合神明，乃與天通。
“The way of a king shows the way of Heaven”
Being a king, here, means that Virtue will gather spiritual lights and take you through the Heavens.
天乃道，德與天通，則與道合同也。
“The way of Heaven shows the way of Dao”
When Virtue takes you through the Heavens, you follow Dao and become united as one with it.
道乃久。與道合同，乃能長久。
“The way of Dao shows the way of longevity”
Following Dao and becoming united with it, one can endure indefinitely.
沒身不殆。能公能王，通天合道，四者純備，道德弘遠，無殃無咎，乃與天地俱沒，不危殆也。
“And for the body to be without peril”
If one can follow the way of impartiality and kings, they can travel through Heaven and unite with Dao. These four things prepare one for Dao and Virtue to expand immensely. One will be without misfortune and without error. Then they can be a companion of Heaven and Earth until both have disappeared, yet they will not be endangered.

Ancient Chinese doctors observed that the kidneys, liver, heart, spleen, and lungs were harmed by fear, anger, euphoria, anxiety, and sadness, respectively.[56] Heshang Gong shows in chapter 16 that silence-and-stillness (jing, 靜) is the root from which the nourishment of Heaven, Earth, Virtue, and Dao reaches the body and mind. By abstaining from strong emotions and moving away from desires, we clear the paths through which this nourishment will travel. By connecting to this root, we also reconnect with the spiritual intelligence (shen ming), housed within the heart-mind. This spiritual intelligence allows the heart-mind to gain sovereignty over the emotions and thereby become the active leader in our lives – rather than a reactive head, and leader in name only.

This clarity of spirit allows for the broader consideration and non-differentiation suggested in the word gong (公). Gong means public, as opposed to private (私 , si). It also means respected elder, as in Heshang Gong (Riverside Elder). Such an elder is a "man of the people." He sees his community as his family, and the community knows they can trust him with their welfare, for his interests are public rather than private, or selfish (私). In this way, gong also means "impartial." Heshang Gong explains that the way of the gong (elder) is impartial, honourable (upright), and without selfishness (公正無私). Being without selfishness, one becomes a leader, for few would not follow someone who truly seeks to benefit them.

By connecting to the root (silence and stillness), one becomes peaceful like the gong, thereby attaining the sovereignty of the heart-mind. As such, they no longer act out of fear and desire, and so move with the Way of Heaven, and thereby the way of Dao. As Lao Zi says in chapter 25:

> Man is regulated by Earth
> Earth is regulated by Heaven
> Heaven is regulated by Dao
> Dao is regulated by its own spontaneous nature (zi ran)

No longer reacting and following the fears and desires of the body, the heart-mind follows the way of Heaven and the spontaneous nature of Dao, leading one back to their pure nature (xing) and destiny-life-force (ming). Reaching pure nature and destiny-life-force, one is sure to live a long and vibrant life.

~ 17 ~

The forefathers of the empire
Were simply known to exist by those below
Next were those with a wide reputation for being loved
Next were those who were feared
Next were those who were reviled
Their sincerity was insufficient!
Of the consequence of words, take great heed!
When accomplishments are completed and left behind
The hundred families all say "We did it naturally"

Chapter 17
淳風 (The Sounds of) Simplicity in the Wind

太上，下知有之。太上，謂太古無名之君。下知有之者，下知上有君，而不臣事，質朴也。
"The forefathers of the empire were simply known to exist by those below"
"The forefathers of the empire" refer to the most ancient rulers who are now unknown.[57] "Are simply known to exist by those below" means that the lower classes knew of a ruler above them but not of his ministers' works. (This is because) things remained in their unaltered states.
其次，親之譽之。其德可見，恩惠可稱，故親愛而譽之。
"Next were those with a wide reputation for being loved"
Their virtue could be seen, and their charity and kindness could be recognized. Thus, they were loved and praised.
其次畏之。設刑法以治之。
"Next were those who were feared"
They governed by establishing punishments and laws.
其次侮之。禁多令煩，不可歸誠，故欺侮之。
"Next were those who were reviled"
To have many prohibitions causes many troubles. The nation could not return to sincerity and truth, so the people were not honest with these rulers, but secretly reviled them.
信不足焉。君信不足於下，下則應之以不信，而欺其君也。

“Their sincerity was insufficient!”
When the ruler’s sincerity is not sufficient towards those below him, those below him follow his example, act insincerely, and try to cheat the ruler.
猶兮其貴言。說太上之君，舉事猶，貴重於言，恐離道失自然也。
“Of the consequence of words, take great heed!”
The forefathers of the emperor measured their actions against this standard. They honoured the seriousness of words for fear of moving away from Dao and losing their natural spontaneity.
功成事遂，謂天下太平也。
“When accomplishments are completed and left behind”
This refers to the peace which existed during the time of the forefathers.
百姓皆謂我自然。百姓不知君上之德淳厚，反以為己自當然也。
“The hundred families all say ‘we did it naturally”
When the hundred families do not know of the ruler’s superior virtue and authenticity, they rediscover the natural spontaneity within themselves.

SEVENTEEN

Like the Dao itself, the legendary ancient leaders did not use harsh controls to maintain peace. They simply arranged society in a way that would serve humanity and provide what was needed for people to pursue their means. Consequently, none had to struggle hopelessly to meet their ends, crime and punishment were unnecessary, and people enjoyed the richness of living cooperatively and appreciating all the little miracles that make existence possible. They did not feel obligated to acknowledge the throne but simply went about life as water rolling down the stream. Heshang Gong alludes to this in chapter 10 when he writes:

> Those who govern the body breathe out, and breathe in the vital energy-breaths without commanding their ears to hear it. Those who govern the nation share kindness and Virtue without commanding those below to know about it.

We could take the first rulers in chapter 17 as a metaphor for spiritual intelligence (shen ming). When the individual is regulated by the spontaneous nature of Dao, they no longer feel the limitations of mind, nor a necessity for the mind to follow and dictate. They can do without doing and know without knowing, for the one who sits in the throne is not so obsessed, and possessed, by their authority.

~ 18 ~

When the peacefulness of Dao is abandoned
Benevolence and righteousness appear
When learnedness and intelligence are brought forth
Great deceit appears
When the six family relations are out of harmony
Filial piety appears
When the nation is on the eve of chaos
Loyal ministers appear

Chapter 18
俗薄 The Frailty of Social Custom

大道廢，有仁義。大道之時，家有孝子，戶有忠信，仁義不見也。大道廢不用，惡逆生，乃有仁義可傳道。
“When the peacefulness of Dao is abandoned, benevolence and righteousness appear”
During times when there is peace and Dao, children obey their parents and there is loyalty and sincerity in the home. Benevolence and righteousness are not seen. When the peacefulness of Dao is abandoned rather than utilized, hatred and disobedience arise. Then benevolence and righteousness appear in order to restore Dao (in the home).
智慧出，有大偽。智慧之君賤德而貴言，賤質而貴文，下則應之以為大偽姦詐。
“When learnedness and intelligence are brought forth, great deceit appears”
When the ruler is knowledgeable and intelligent, he disdains virtue, and values words; he disdains substance, but values ornamentation. The lower classes then follow his example and act with great deceit, debauchery, and fraudulence.
六親不和，有孝慈。六紀絕，親戚不合，乃有孝慈相牧養也。
“When the six family relations are out of harmony, filial piety appears”
When the six family relations are broken, parents and relatives do not gather together. Filial piety is then needed to bring them together and make them help each other.

國家昏亂，有忠臣。政令不明，上下相怨，邪僻爭權，乃有忠臣匡正其君也。此言天下太平不知仁，人盡無欲不知廉，各自潔己不知貞。大道之世，仁義沒，孝慈滅，猶日中盛明，眾星失光。

“When the nation is on the eve of chaos, loyal ministers appear”

When official orders do not come from a place of enlightenment, those above and below fight with each other and commit atrocious acts in vying for power. loyal ministers then appear to correct the situation, and re-align the ruler (with Dao).

This is to say that when the world has great peace, there is no knowledge of benevolence. People die without desires and do not know anything about being upright. Each person purifies themselves but does not know about virtue. During times of the great peace of Dao, benevolence and right-conduct are submerged and filial piety disappears. This is similar to the brilliant light of mid-day when the multitude of starlights can no longer be seen.

EIGHTEEN

Just as the anonymous rulers of chapter 17 brought order to the nation in a way that seemed to arise naturally, Dao is pervasive when virtues arise naturally rather than being imposed by rules of conduct.

Departing from the peace of Dao, one may experience frustration, impatience, and the deep sense of disconnection and separation that aggravates our selfish impulses. Realizing again an inner harmony and peace that spreads throughout our spirit and energy, this sense of opposition loses its fuel source. Consequently, righteousness, piety, and dedication are subsumed in this Oneness.

~ 19 ~

Quit sageliness
Abandon wisdom
And the people will benefit one hundred fold
Quit benevolence, abandon right-conduct
And the people will return to caring for their parents
Quit cleverness, abandon profit
And robbers and thieves will not exist

These three
Are only ornamental, and not satisfactory
Thus, we have the following:
Observe the natural state
Embrace the unaltered
Minimize self-importance
And have few desires

Chapter 19
還淳 Return to Simplicity

絕聖,絕聖制作，反初守元。五帝垂象，倉頡作書，不如三皇結繩無文。
“Quit sageliness”
Quit building institutions of sageliness. Return to the beginning and embrace the origin. The five emperors passed down knowledge of the constellations and Cang Jie brought forth literacy, but they were not as good as the Three Sovereigns[58] who notated with knotted cords and had no written characters.
棄智，棄智慧，反無為。
“Abandon wisdom”
Abandon wisdom and intelligence; return to effortlessness.
民利百倍。農事修，公無私。
“And the people will benefit one hundred fold”
They will study farming and agriculture; they will be fair and without selfishness.

絕仁棄義，絕仁之見恩惠，棄義之尚華言。
“Quit benevolence, abandon right-conduct”
Quit benevolent displays of kindness and charity. Abandon right-conduct that emphasizes superficial speech.
民復孝慈。德化淳也。
“And the people will return to caring for their parents”
Their virtue will become sincere.
絕巧棄利，絕巧者，詐偽亂真也。棄利者，塞貪路閉權門也。
“Quit cleverness, abandon profit”
Quit cleverness, swindling, deceit, and confusing the truth. Abandon profit, block the road to greed, and close the doors to power and authority.
盜賊無有。上化公正，下無邪私。
“And robbers and thieves will not exist”
When those above become fair and upright, those below will be without wickedness and selfishness.

此三者，謂上三事所棄絕也。
“These three”
Meaning the above three actions of quitting and abandoning.
以為文不足，以為文不足者，文不足以教民。
“Are only ornamental, and not satisfactory”
They are ornamental and not satisfactory because what is ornamental does not instruct the people satisfactorily.
故令有所屬。當如下句。
“Thus, we have the following:”
Referring to the sentences which follow.
見素抱樸，見素者，當抱素守真，不尚文飾也。抱朴者，當見其篤朴，以示下，故可法則。
“Observe the natural state, embrace the unaltered”
Seeing the natural state, you should embrace the natural state; hold onto reality rather than ornamentation. Embrace unaltered substance. See the genuine unaltered state when it shows itself in the world so that you can abide by its example.
少私寡欲。少私者，正無私也。寡欲者，當知足也。
“Minimize self-importance and have few desires”
Those who minimize self-importance become honourable and without self-importance. Those who have few desires know satisfaction.

NINETEEN

Lao Zi and Heshang Gong speak to what Chogyam Trungpa (1939-1987) more recently termed “spiritual materialism.” This is the trap of letting the materialistic desire to possess things leak into our spiritual development – using our spiritual development as cultural capital or status symbols, and wearing it like a three-piece suit, showing everyone how successful we have become, and feeding this progress to the ravenous ego rather than allowing it to grow and blossom. Lao Zi and Heshang Gong repeatedly warn of displaying our virtues, in hopes that we learn not to bite the hand (Virtue) that feeds us.

~ 20 ~

Stop learning
And there will be no grief
Is reluctant acceptance so different from rejection?
What is the difference between good and evil?
People in a fearful place cannot be without fear
Uncultivated! They have not been centered!

The crowd is joyous and buoyant
As though having caught a massive beast
Or celebrating spring rites
I alone am like the clearness of still water
Alas, in this way, making no predictions
Nor making myself predictable
Like a newborn baby
Not yet able to make these distinctions
Roaming! As though having no home to return to

The people in the crowd all have more than they need
But I alone am as one who has lost everything
I have the mind of a simpleton, indeed
Clouded and muddy!
It is customary for people to have clear and cutting perception
I alone am as though in a twilight of understanding
It is customary for people to be fascinated
I alone am as though distant and forlorn

Quick! I am like the ocean
Drifting! As though without any place to stop
The multitudes of people all have purpose
Yet I alone seem stubborn
And unsophisticated

I alone seem strange to others
For I cherish the nourishment of the mother

Chapter 20
異俗 Strange Customs

絕學, 絕學不真，不合道文。
“Stop learning”
Stop learning what is not real; do not mix Dao with superficialities.
無憂。除浮華則無憂患也。
“And there will be no grief”
Eliminate flowery and lofty speech and there will be no grief and worry.
唯之與阿，相去幾何。同為應對而相去幾何。疾時賤質而貴文。
“Is reluctant acceptance so different from rejection?”
Both are necessary responses, yet how do they differ? The problem today is that people do not value the substance, but instead value embellishments and appearances.
善之與惡，相去若何。善者稱譽，惡者諫諍，能相去何如。疾時惡忠直，用邪佞也。
“What is the difference between good and evil?”
Those who are good are praised and awarded titles. Those who are evil are admonished and remonstrated. How can these be so different? The problem today is that evil people are loyal to the upright but use their evil to flatter them.
人之所畏，不可不畏。人謂道人也。人所畏者，畏不絕學之君也。不可不畏，近令色，殺仁賢。
“People in a fearful place cannot be without fear”
People, here, refers to people with Dao. People in a fearful place fear that the emperor will not stop learning (false teachings). They cannot be without the fear that he will order the execution of the benevolent and virtuous.
荒兮其未央哉！言世俗人荒亂，欲進學為文，未央止也。
“Uncultivated! They have not been centered!”
The customs of today’s people amount to uncultivated chaos. Their desires for advancement, and their study of superficialities, have never been centered or stopped.

眾人熙熙，熙熙，放淫多情欲也。
“The crowd is joyous and buoyant”
Joyous and buoyant, here, means openly licentious, with many desires and strong emotions.
如享太牢，如飢思太牢之具，意無足時也 。
“As though having caught a massive beast “
As though hungry and preparing to slaughter a massive animal.

如春登臺。春，陰陽交通，萬物感動，登台觀之，意志淫淫然。
“Or celebrating spring rites”
In spring, yin and yang mix and pass through each other. The emotions of the myriad things are stirred, and they travel upwards to look at the stars. Their thoughts and intentions burn with licentiousness.
我獨怕兮其未兆，我獨怕然安靜，未有情欲之形兆也。
“I alone am like the clearness of still water, alas, in this way, making no predictions nor making myself predictable”
I alone am apprehensive, and so calm and tranquil – not yet possessing any form or sign of desires and strong emotions.
如嬰兒之未孩。如小兒未能答偶人時也。
“Like a newborn baby, not yet able to make these distinctions”
Like a small child, not yet able to participate in such festivities.
乘乘兮若無所歸。我乘乘如窮鄙，無所歸就。
“Roaming! As though having no home to return to”
I roam about as though poor and with nowhere that I return to or leave from.

眾人皆有餘，眾人餘財以為奢，餘智以為詐。
“The people in the crowd all have more than they need”
When the masses have too many valuables, they waste them; when they have too much cleverness, they use it to cheat others.
而我獨若遺。我獨如遺棄，似於不足也。
“But I alone am as one who has lost everything”
I alone am as though having lost or discarded everything, seeming to not have enough.
我愚人之心也哉，不與俗人相隨，守一不移，如愚人之心也。
“I have the mind of a simpleton, indeed,”
He does not follow the customs that others all partake in together. He embraces Oneness and does not move. This is like someone who has the mind of a simpleton.
沌沌兮。無所分別。
“Clouded and muddy!”
(He abides in Oneness,) without separation or differentiation.
俗人昭昭，明且達也。
“It is customary for people to have clear and cutting perception”
They clearly perceive and define things.

我獨若昏。如闇昧也。
“I alone am as though in a twilight of understanding”
He is as though in the dark and unable to see.
俗人察察，察察，急且疾也。
“It is customary for people to be fascinated”
They are curious and scrutinizing with an urgency that borders on illness.
我獨悶悶。悶悶，無所割截。
“I alone am as though distant and forlorn”
He seems to be in low spirits, as though he was not given his share.

忽兮若海，我獨忽忽，如江海之流，莫知其所窮極也。
“Quick! I am like the ocean”
I alone am sudden and spontaneous, like the Yangtze river flowing into the ocean.
漂兮若無所止。我獨漂漂，若飛若揚，無所止也，志意在神域也。
“Drifting! As though without any place to stop”
I alone am drifting and floating about, as though high, spreading out, and without any place to stop. My will and intention reside in spiritual realms.
眾人皆有以，以，有為也。
“The multitudes of people all have purpose”
Purpose, here, means to be taking action.
而我獨頑, 我獨無為。
“Yet I alone seem stubborn”
I alone am not taking action.
似鄙。鄙，似若不逮也。
“And unsophisticated”
He seems as though un-ambitious.

我獨異於人,我獨與人異也。
“I alone seem strange to others”
He is the only one amongst them who seems strange.
而貴食母。食，用也。母，道也。我獨貴用道也
“For I cherish the nourishment of the mother”
Nourishment is utilized. Mother, here, means Dao. “I alone cherish the utilization of Dao.”[59]

TWENTY

Chapter 20 exemplifies the Daoist veneration of childlike innocence. The ideal state of mind for the Daoist is like that of a tranquil newborn – pure awareness and wonder, receptive and open. Most people go about their day with an assortment of expectations about what it will bring. While this helps us to make sense of, survive, and even thrive in this world, it also holds us back from appreciating and experiencing life as it spontaneously changes. The newborn simply takes in new things and experiences. It has not yet decided what will come based on its accumulated past experiences. It is simply open, aware, present, curious. Lao Zi describes this absence of the conceit of knowing this and that, free of the arrogance to push these views on others. “Playing the fool,” Lao Zi escapes these traps which would serve only to submerge him in the confusion that has carried away so many others. Holding to this openness, he stays with the life giving nourishment of Dao, absorbing the Virtue of Heaven and vital-breath of the Earth.

~ 21 ~

Openness is Virtue's form
With your attention on Dao alone
This will arrive

Dao acts on all things spontaneously and suddenly
Sudden! Spontaneous! Within, there is image
Spontaneous! Sudden! Within, there is being
Obscure! Dark! Within, there is essence
This essence of utmost reality
Within it is sincerity

It is ancient and it is modern
Its attributes do not leave
By it, we can examine how the multitudes began
How am I able to know that the multitudes
Began according to this nature of beginnings?
By this

Chapter 21
虛心 Empty the Heart and Mind

孔德之容，孔，大也。有大德之人，無所不容，能受垢濁，處謙卑也。
"Openness is Virtue's form"
Openness means immense. Those with immense Virtue can take on anything. They can accept the dirt and stains yet remain humble.
唯道是從。唯，獨也。大德之人，不隨世俗所行，獨從於道也。
"With your attention on Dao alone, this will arrive"
To keep focus means to keep a solitary focus. Those of immense Virtue do not follow the ways and practices of the world, but focus only on following Dao.

道之為物，唯怳唯忽。道之於萬物，獨怳忽往來，於其無所定也。
"Dao acts on all things spontaneously and suddenly"

Dao comes and goes in things spontaneously and suddenly. It is not bound to any one place.
忽兮怳兮，其中有象；道唯忽怳無形，之中獨有萬物法象。
“Sudden! Spontaneous! Within, there is image”
Dao is sudden and spontaneous. Within its formlessness, the myriad things conform to their appearances.
怳兮忽兮，其中有物。道唯怳忽，其中有一，經營生化，因氣立質。
“Spontaneous! Sudden! Within, there is being”
Dao is spontaneous and sudden. At its center is Oneness. It passes through barriers to transform life, and uses energy-breath to establish substance.
窈兮冥兮，其中有精，道唯窈冥無形，其中有精實，神明相薄，陰陽交會也。
“Obscure! Dark! Within, there is essence”
The Dao is obscure, dark, and without form. Within it is the essence of reality. Spirit and radiance join together in one thin line. Yin and yang blend together.
其精甚真，言存精氣，其妙甚真，非有飾也。
“This essence of utmost reality”
Lao Zi is talking here about the existence of the [Dao’s][60] vital energy-breath, a mystery which is very real. It is not a deception.
其中有信。道匿功藏名，其信在中也。
“Within, it is sincerity”
Dao conceals its skill, and hides itself from being known, yet it is sincere through to the center.

自古及今，其名不去，自，從也。自古至今，道常在不去。
“It is ancient and it is modern. Its attributes do not leave”
Dao follows itself. It is ancient and modern, for Dao is always present. It never leaves.
以閱眾甫，閱，稟也。甫，始也。言道稟與，萬物始生，從道受氣。
“By it, we can examine how the multitudes began”
To examine is to show. To examine the beginning is to find the start. Lao Zi is saying that Dao shows how the myriad things began to arise. While guided by Dao, they received energy-breath.
吾何以知眾甫之然哉。吾何以知萬物從道受氣。
“How am I able to know that the multitudes began according to this nature of beginnings?”

(In other words) “How can I know that the myriad things followed Dao to be infused with energy-breath?”
以此。此，今也。以今萬物皆得道精氣而生，動作起居，非道不然。
“By this”
“This” refers to “the present.” In this very moment, the myriad things all receive the Dao’s vital energy-breath in order to live, to move, to stand up, and to rise to their places. If not by a Path (Dao), this could not have happened.

TWENTY-ONE

In chapter 21, Lao Zi’s explanation of creation reflects that found in chapter eight of *The Yellow Emperor’s Classic of Internal Medicine, Spiritual Hinge Text* (*Huang Di Nei Jing, Ling Shu Jing*):

> Qi Bo replied:
> That which Heaven gives an individual is De (intrinsic virtue). That which Earth gives an individual is qi (energy-breath). When De and qi intermingle, there is life. From life, what then comes into existence is called jing (essence). When the two jing (of Heaven and Earth) combine and grasp each other, we have what is called shen (spirit).

While it is Virtue from Heaven and the qi of Earth that brings about life, it is the essence of Dao – containing image, being, and all that is real – which makes this possible. This Dao-jing is analogous to the DNA of all existence, with its attributes being present in all images, beings, minds, and spirits. As Lao Zi and Heshang Gong comment above:

Obscure! Dark! Within, there is essence

> The Dao is obscure, dark, and without form. Within it is the essence of reality. Spirit and radiance join together in one thin line. Yin and yang blend together.

This essence of utmost reality
Within, it is sincerity
It is ancient and it is modern. Its attributes do not leave
By it, we can examine how the multitudes began

~ 22 ~

That which is flexible is preserved
That which is bent is straightened
That which is empty is filled
That which is broken is repaired
That which is lacking acquires
That which is excessive becomes confused
Therefore, the Sage embraces Oneness
So as to bring the world into alignment

He does not look for himself
Thus, he has enlightened vision
He does not claim to be correct
Thus, he is believable
He is not prideful
Thus, he achieves
He does not self-aggrandize
Thus, he endures

Neither agreeing nor quarrelling
Nothing can pull him into dispute
The old saying, "be flexible in order to maintain wholeness"
Are these but empty words?
To those who keep sincerity whole
All things return

Chapter 22
益謙 Advantages of Humility

曲則全，曲己從眾，不自專，則全其身也。
"That which is flexible is preserved"
Being flexible for the greater good, and not doing things only for oneself, one's body and character are preserved.
枉則直，枉，屈己而伸人，久久自得直也。
"That which is bent is straightened"
Bending, here, means that by bending yourself low in order to stretch others high, over time you will also be straight.

窪則盈，地窪下，水流之；人謙下，德歸之。
“That which is empty is filled”
Where the earth is low, water flows into it. When people humble themselves, Virtue returns to them.
敝則新，自受弊薄，後己先人，天下敬之，久久自新也。
“That which is broken is repaired”
Taking oneself to be wrong and inferior, putting oneself last and others first, the world will respect this. Over time, such a person is made anew.
少則得，自受取少則得多也，天道祐謙，神明託虛。
“That which is lacking acquires”
Those who take only very little for themselves obtain far more. Heaven and Dao protect the humble. Spiritual intelligence requires emptiness.
多則惑。財多者，惑於所守，學多者，惑於所聞
“That which is excessive becomes confused”
Those who possess many valuables are not sure what they have. Those who study too much are confused about what they have heard.
是以聖人抱一為天下式。抱，守也。式，法也。聖人守一，乃知萬事，故能為天下法式也。
“Therefore, the Sage embraces Oneness so as to bring the world into alignment”
Embrace, here, means to guard within. Order, here, means principle. The Sage guards Oneness within and so knows every action to take. Thus, he can bring the world into alignment.

不自見故明，聖人不以其目視千里之外也，乃因天下之目以視，故能明達也。
“He does not look for himself, thus, he has enlightened vision”
The Sage does not use his eyes to look a thousand miles away, but uses the eyes of the empire to investigate. Therefore, he can see clearly and intelligently.
不自是故彰，聖人不自以為是而非人，故能彰顯於世。
“He does not claim to be correct, thus, he is believable”
The Sage does not claim himself to be correct and others to be wrong. Thus, he can be obvious and apparent.
不自伐故有功，伐，取也。聖人德化流行，不自取其美，故有功於天下。
“He is not prideful, thus, he achieves”

To be prideful is to take for oneself. The Sage's Virtue transforms by flowing and circulating. He does not take its beauty to be his own. Thus, his achievements remain in the world.
不自矜故長。矜，大也。聖人不自貴大，故能久不危。
"He does not self-aggrandize,[61] thus, he endures"
To sympathize means to aggrandize. The Sage does not aggrandize his honour; thus, he can endure without danger.

夫惟不爭，故天下莫能與之爭。此言天下賢與不肖，無能與不爭者爭也。
"Neither agreeing nor quarrelling, nothing can pull him into dispute"
When all under heaven deems the Sage to be worthy, he acts as though not this way (worthy). He approaches disputes as though incapable and not disputing..
古之所謂曲則全者，豈虛言哉。傳古言，曲從則全身，此言非虛妄也。
"The old saying, 'be flexible in order to maintain wholeness' – are these but empty words?"
Lao Zi transmits the old saying, "Flexibility preserves the body." These words are not empty and foolish.
誠全而歸之。誠，實也。能行曲從者，實其肌體，歸之於父母，無有傷害也。
"To those who keep sincerity whole, all things return"
Sincerity, here, means what is real. Those who can practice flexibility and bring the muscles of the body back to their true state of flexibility, as provided by their mother and father, will not injure or damage them.

TWENTY-TWO

While solidute offers great potential for self-cultivation and realization, for Lao Zi and Heshang Gong, the Sage did not permanently escape the world but lived amongst the people. Rather than escape to the mountains, the Sage lived in such a way that allowed him to maneuver through the conflicts and difficulties of his day without bringing further danger or disharmony to himself or others. Doing so, he would inadvertently show another way, another path. Understanding the danger of "standing on tiptoes," or even being raised above others, the Sage accomplished his ends by remaining below others, even if they tried to raise him up above themselves. This is not the way of man, but the way of Heaven, the way of water.

This way of the Sage is also described in *The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine, Plain Questions* (*Huang Di Nei Jing, Su Wen*), chapter one:

> Next were the Sages who dwelled in the harmony of Heaven and Earth and accorded with the principles of the eight winds. Their cravings and desires were suited to the era and local customs, and they had no hatred or anger in their hearts. In their activities they had no desire to avoid the world. In their dress and manner, they had no desire to be elevated and admired by popular people. Externally, they did not over-exert their bodies with endeavours; internally, they did not worry and speculate in their thoughts. They considered enjoying tranquility to be the highest application of oneself, and self-realization to be achievement. Physically, they did not deteriorate, and their spiritual vitality did not dissipate.

A brilliant example of the humility Heshang Gong describes can also be found in the Nordic "Law of Jante," encapsulated in
Aksel Sandemose's book *A Fugitive Crosses His Tracks*.[62] The Law of Jante states:

1. You're not to think you are anything special.
2. You're not to think you are as good as we are.
3. You're not to think you are smarter than we are.
4. You're not to convince yourself that you are better than we are.
5. You're not to think you know more than we do.
6. You're not to think you are more important than we are.
7. You're not to think you are good at anything.
8. You're not to laugh at us.
9. You're not to think anyone cares about you.
10. You're not to think you can teach us anything.

~ 23 ~

To speak rarely is natural
Gusting wind does not last in the early morning
Sudden rainstorms do not last all day

Who acts in this way? Heaven and Earth
If Heaven and Earth cannot continue in such a way
What then, should be the case for men?
They should follow the method of Dao!

(To be a person of) Dao, be one with Dao
(To be a person of) Virtue, be one with Virtue
(To be a person of) loss, be one with loss

Those who are one with Dao
Dao is also happy to have them
Those who are one with Virtue
Virtue is also happy to have them
Those who are one with loss
Loss is also happy to have them

Where faith and trust is not satisfactory
There will be no faith and trust

Chapter 23
虛無 Emptiness and Nothingness

希言自然。希言者，謂愛言也。愛言者，自然之道。
“To speak rarely is natural”
To speak rarely means to hold words precious. To hold words precious is natural to the Dao.
故飄風不終朝，驟雨不終日。飄風，疾風也。驟雨，暴雨也。言疾不能長，暴不能久也。
“Gusting wind does not last in the early morning. Sudden rainstorms do not last all day”

Gusting wind refers to the winds of illness. “Sudden rainstorms” refers to raining down violence. Illness cannot last. Violence cannot continue.

孰為此者？天地。孰，誰也。誰為此飄風暴雨者乎？天地所為。
“ Who acts in this way? Heaven and Earth ”
Who causes these gusting winds and violent rainstorms? Heaven and Earth.
天地尚不能久，不能終於朝暮也。
“If Heaven and Earth cannot continue in such a way”
If they cannot go on like this from morning until night
而況於人乎？天地至神合為飄風暴雨，尚不能使終朝至暮，何況人欲為暴卒乎。
“What then, should be the case for men?”
Heaven and Earth combine their spirits to make gusting winds and violent rainstorms, yet cannot make them go on from morning until night. Given this, why should men wish to drive their armies forward?
故從事於道者，從，為也。人為事當如道安靜，不當如飄風驟雨也。
“They should follow the method of Dao!”
Follow, here, means “act.” Men should conduct affairs like the Dao, in peace and stillness, and should not conduct affairs like gusting winds and violent rainstorms.

道者同於道，道者，謂好道人也。同於道者，所謂與道同也。
“(To be a person of) Dao, be one with Dao”
“Of Dao” refers to those who love Dao. “One with Dao” means that they follow Dao and unify with it.
德者同於德，德者，謂好德之人也。同於德者，所謂與德同也。
“(To be a person of) Virtue, be one with Virtue”
“Of Virtue” refers to those who love Virtue. “One with Virtue” means that they follow Virtue and unify with it.
失者同於失。失，謂任己而失人也。同於失者，所謂與失同也。
“(To be a person of) loss, be one with loss”
“Of loss” means that they follow only themselves, and so lose others. “One with loss” means that they follow loss and unify with it.

同於道者，道亦樂得之。與道同者，道亦樂得之也。
“Those who are one with Dao, Dao is also happy to have them”

Those who encounter Dao, and are one with it, Dao is also happy to have them.
同於德者，德亦樂得之，與德同者，德亦樂得之也。
“Those who are one with Virtue, Virtue is also happy to have them”
Those who encounter Virtue, and are one with it, Virtue is also happy to have them.
同於失者，失亦樂得之。與失同者，失亦樂失之也。
“Those who are one with loss, loss is also happy to have them”
Those who encounter loss, and are one with it, loss is also happy to lose them.

信不足焉，君信不足於下，下則應君以不信也。
“Where faith and trust is not satisfactory”
Rulers who do not sufficiently trust those below them are not trusted by those below them.
有不信焉。此言物類相歸，同聲相應，同氣相求。雲從龍，風從虎，水流濕，火就燥，自然之類也。
“There will be no faith and trust”
This explains that things which are of the same type return to each other. Notes resonate together, energy-breaths seek each other, clouds follow the dragon, wind follows the tiger, water drifts towards what is wet, fire approaches what is dry. This is the spontaneous nature of types.[63]

TWENTY-THREE

Though calamities and misfortunes may arise, one should not give up Dao and Virtue. Losing faith in Dao and Virtue, speaking at length of despair and hopelessness: this invites further misfortune. Lao Zi and Heshang Gong remind us that words are powerful and so should not be given to these losses. One may talk about seeming failures for hours on end, but if they instead save their words, have faith in Dao and Virtue, and wait for the storm to pass, Dao and Virtue will return.[64]

Heshang Gong explains that chapter 23 expresses the concept of “resonance response” (gan ying), quoting an early commentary (the *Wenyan*) on the *Yi Jing* (*I Ching*), chapter one (Heaven, line 5) which describes the mutual attraction that occurs between things of the same type. Another early text that speaks to this concept is the Huainan Zi, chapter 6, which states:

> Now, the way things adhere to others that share mutual categories is a most profound and subtle mystery. Knowledge cannot determine it, nor can eloquence

unravel it. So (it is said), “when the east wind blows, the wine overflows. When the silkworms are rolled into thread, the second lute string (made of silk) breaks. Somehow it resonated. Drawing a picture in the ashes, moonlight hits the watchtower. A whale dies, and a star then falls out of the sky. Something moved them.”

When a Sage holds the throne, keeping Dao in his breast without a word, his grace reaches the myriad people. When the ruler and his minister have thoughts of deceiving each other, images of “back-to-back” show their craftiness in the sky. Spirit and energy-breath share a call and response.[65]

~ 24 ~

Those who stand on tiptoes are not established
Those who straddle do not stride
Those who display themselves are not brilliant
Those who claim to be correct are not believable
Those who boast are without achievement
Those who sympathize with themselves do not endure
When Dao remains, people say “surplus food goes foul”
All creatures are untrusting of that which appears foul
To hold on to Dao, these things must be avoided

Chapter 24
苦恩 Hardship and Mercy

企者不立，企，進也。謂貪權慕名，進取功榮，則不可久立身行道也。
“Those who stand on tiptoes are not established”
Standing on tiptoes, here, refers to status seekers. Greedy for position and longing for fame, status seekers chase after glory and so cannot endure in establishing themselves on the path of Dao.
跨者不行，自以為貴而跨於人，眾共蔽之，使不得行。
“Those who straddle do not stride”
Those who try to bring honours and glory to themselves by sitting above others will be blocked by others and not gain any ground.
自見者不明，人自見其形容以為好，自見其所行以為應道，殊不知其形醜，操行之鄙。
“Those who display themselves are not brilliant”
Some people display themselves, believing their appearance to be pleasant. Some display their actions, believing them to be in accord with the Dao. Finding themselves extraordinary, they do not know when they are disgraceful but carry on their petty ways.
自是者不彰，自以為是而非人，眾共蔽之，使不得彰明。
“Those who claim to be correct are not believable”

Those who claim themselves to be correct, and others to be wrong, will be blocked by others. (Thus,) they will not attain a clear perspective.
自伐者無功，所謂輒自伐取其功美，即失有功於人也。
“Those who boast are without achievement”
Those who try to load themselves with claims about their own achievements and refinement soon lose others’ esteem about any such achievements.
自矜者不長。好自矜大者，不可以長久。
“Those who sympathize with themselves do not endure”
Those who are pleased with themselves and proudly aggrandize themselves cannot endure for long.

其在道也，曰：餘食贅行。贅，貪也。使此自矜伐之人，在治國之道，日賦歛餘祿食以為貪行。
“When Dao remains, people say ‘surplus food goes foul’”
Surplus, here, refers to greed. Proud men will aggrandize themselves and, if governing a state, will extract excessive taxes when there is surplus. Greed is then perpetuated (amongst the people).
物或惡之。此人在位，動欲傷害，故物無有不畏惡之者。
“All creatures are untrusting of that which appears foul”
Those who hold the throne, yet are perverted by a desire to injure and kill, will be feared and despised by all creatures.
故有道者不處。言有道之人不居其國也。
“To hold on to Dao, these things must be avoided”
Lao Zi is saying that men of Dao will not stay in nations like this.

TWENTY-FOUR

Lao Zi continues to illustrate the necessity for balancing strong and soft, high and low. While one should strive for excellence, they must balance this excellence by remaining humble. If the skilled warrior is not kind and compassionate, if the wealthy person does not moderate their desires, if those holding great authority do not develop tolerance, they will suffer greatly from the pull of this power.

~ 25 ~

Something exists, random and chaotic
Yet perfect and complete
Existing before Heaven and Earth were born
Still and serene, desolate and empty, it stands alone
Unchanged, it travels in circles and is not hazardous
It can thereby serve as Heaven and Earth's mother

I do not know its name, but write its name as Dao
Impelled to name it, I call it Vast Greatness
Vast and great, I call it Drifting
Drifting, I call it Spreading Out
Spreading Out, I call it Returning

Therefore, Dao is immense, Heaven is immense
Earth is immense, and the Emperor is also immense
From the periphery to the center
There exists the Four Immensities
And the Emperor represents their unification

Man is regulated by Earth
Earth is regulated by Heaven
Heaven is regulated by Dao
Dao is regulated by its own spontaneous nature

Chapter 25
象元 Image and Origin

有物混成，先天地生。謂道無形，混沌而成萬物，乃在天地之前。
"Something exists, random and chaotic, yet perfect and complete, existing before Heaven and Earth were born"
This means that Dao is without form. It is stirred up and chaotic, yet completes the myriad things. It existed before Heaven and Earth.
寂兮寥兮，獨立而不改，寂者，無音聲。寥者，空無形。獨立者，無匹雙。不改者，化有常。
"Still and serene, desolate and empty, it stands alone, unchanged"

What is still and serene has no sound or voice. What is empty is hollow and without form. What stands alone is not paired. (Dao) does not change because its transformations are constant.
周行而不殆，道通行天地，無所不入，在陽不焦，託蔭不腐，無不貫穿，而不危怠也。
“It travels in circles and is not hazardous”
Dao passes over, and through, Heaven and Earth. There is nothing it does not go into. It brings yang into being, but is not burned. It supports yin but does not wear out. There is nothing it does not go through. Further, it is never idle or dangerous.
可以為天下母。道育養萬物精氣，如母之養子。
“It can thereby serve as Heaven and Earth’s mother“
Dao gives birth to, and nurtures, the myriad things, giving them its vital energy-breath like a mother raising children.

吾不知其名，字之曰道，我不見道之形容，不知當何以名之，見萬物皆從道所生，故字之曰道。
“I do not know its name, but write its name as Dao”
(Lao Zi says) “I do not see Dao’s form or appearance, and so do not know what to call it. Seeing that the myriad things follow a path towards life, I therefore call it the Path (Dao).”
強為之名曰大。不知其名，強曰大者，高而無上，羅而無外，無不包容，故曰大也。
“Impelled to name it, I call it Vast Greatness”
(Lao Zi says) “I do not know its name, but if forced, I would call it Vast Greatness. So high that nothing is above it; its net is so wide that nothing is outside of it. There is nothing that it does not enwrap and cover. Therefore, I call it Vast Greatness.”
大曰逝，其為大，非若天常在上，非若地常在下，乃復逝去，無常處所也。
“Vast and great, I call it Drifting”
Its reach is vast. Unlike Heaven, which is always above; unlike Earth, which is always below; it comes and goes, never residing in only one place.
逝曰遠，言遠者，窮乎無窮，布氣天地，無所不通也。
“Drifting, I call it Spreading Out”
Spreading out, it has nothing, yet there is nothing it does not have. Covering Heaven and Earth with energy-breath, there is nothing it does not pass

through.
遠曰反。言其遠不越絕，乃復反在人身也。
“Spreading Out, I call it Returning”
Spreading out, it does not go on without stopping, but also returns and exists in the human body.

故道大，天大，地大，王亦大。道大者，包羅天地，無所不容也。天大者，無所不蓋也。地大者，無所不載也。王大者，無所不制也。
“Therefore, Dao is immense, Heaven is immense, Earth is immense, and the Emperor is also immense”
Dao is immense. It wraps Heaven and Earth in its net. There is nothing it does not enclose. Heaven is immense. There is nothing it does not cover. Earth is immense. There is nothing it does not carry. The Emperor is immense. There is nothing he does not overpower.
域中有四大，四大，道、天、地、王也。凡有稱有名，則非其極也。言道則有所由，有所由然後謂之為道，然則是道稱中之大也，不若無稱之大也，無稱不可而得為名，曰域也。天地王皆在乎無稱之內也，故曰域中有四大者也。
“From the periphery to the center, there exists the Four Immensities”
The Four Immensities are Dao, Heaven, Earth, and the Emperor. Together, this is their name. This is not to say that they are The Ultimate (Ji). Lao Zi is saying that because Dao exists, a cause exists. Because this cause is in nature, what it leaves behind are called “the creations of Dao.” In nature, this Dao is called The Immensity Within. This is not the same as calling it The Nameless Immensity – The nameless which cannot be given a name is called The Ultimate. Heaven, Earth, and the Emperor all have the nameless within them! For this reason, it is said: “from the periphery to the center, The Four Immensities exist.”
而王居其一焉。八極之內有四大，王居其一也。
“And the Emperor represents their unification”
Within the extremes of the eight directions, there are Four Immensities, and the Emperor represents their unification.

人法地，人當法地安靜和柔也，種之得五穀，掘之得甘泉，勞而不怨也，有功而不置也。
“Man is regulated by Earth”

Man should follow the example of Earth's peacefulness, stillness, harmony, and softness. People sow seeds and obtain the five grains. They dig and obtain sweet springs. Though they work the Earth, the Earth is not resentful. It provides bounteous results and does not abandon its dependents.
地法天，天澹泊不動，施而不求報，生長萬物，無所收取。
"Earth is regulated by Heaven"
Heaven is an anchor of tranquility that does not move. It provides and does not seek anything in return. It extends the lives of the myriad things without collecting anything from them.
天法道，道清靜不言，陰行精氣，萬物自成也。
"Heaven is regulated by Dao"
The Dao is clear, tranquil and does not speak. Yin circulates vital energy-breaths, and the myriad things complete themselves.
道法自然。道性自然，無所法也。
"Dao is regulated by its own spontaneous nature"
The nature of Dao is self-sufficient. It is without any regulator.

TWENTY-FIVE

Following Heshang Gong's commentary, the last four lines of chapter 25 could be translated "*Man should follow the example of Earth, for Earth follows Heaven, and Heaven follows Dao. Dao is regulated by its own spontaneous nature*."

As all things constantly change and transform according to Dao, Dao cannot be described. How can something that encompasses all changes and transformations, constantly doing so in accordance with past, present, and future, infinite times at any given moment, yet never itself changing whatsoever, be described? Within it, images exist, beings exist; yet it precedes the existence of any shape, colour, or attribute. Thus, it is without name. Heshang Gong animates Lao Zi's thought process: "I do not see Dao's form or appearance, and so do not know what to call it. Seeing that the myriad things follow a path towards life, I therefore call it the Path (Dao)."

This path towards life is natural, spontaneous: *zi ran*. Part of the yin-yang dichotomy is moving towards life (yang) and moving towards death (yin); however, if one is too forceful in striving for yang, they inevitably fall out of balance and cannot resist the pull of yin. Spontaneity allows a natural balance to be achieved, like the fluctuations of yin and yang that maintain homeostasis in a body or ecosystem. The closer one gets to spontaneous nature (zi ran), the more tranquil and empty they become (like Heaven); the more peaceful, quiet, harmonious, and adaptive they become (like Earth). This, as Lao Zi often explains, [66] is the path of life.

~ 26 ~

Heaviness brings lightness back to the root
Calm stillness rules restlessness
Therefore the prince walks all day
Without parting from his luggage cart
Even when there are glorious things to behold
And comfortable places to stay
He overcomes his urges
And what about the master of ten thousand chariots
If he himself is light (ungrounded)
And easily carried away by the world?
As a result of this "lightness," his ministers are lost
As a result of their restlessness, rulers are lost

Chapter 26
重德 The Virtue of Heaviness

重為輕根，人君不重則不尊，治身不重則失神，草木之花葉輕，故零落，根重故長存也。
"Heaviness brings lightness back to the root"
Rulers who do not remain (grounded and) "heavy" are not respected. Ruling the body without this "heaviness" results in loss of the spirit. The flowers and leaves of plants and trees are light, thus they all fall off. Their foundations are heavy, and thus survive a long time.
靜為躁君。人君不靜則失威，治身不靜則身危，龍靜故能變化，虎躁故夭虧也。
"Calm stillness rules restlessness"
When a ruler is not calm, he loses his powerful appearance. When people who govern their bodies are not calm, they put their bodies in danger. Dragons remain calm, and are therefore able to adapt and change. Tigers are restless, and so perish early.
是以聖人終日行，不離輜重。輜，靜也。聖人終日行道，不離其靜與重也。
"Therefore the prince walks all day without parting from his luggage cart"

“His luggage cart” refers to his calm stillness. Sages do not stop practicing Dao at any time. They do not part from their calm stillness, but rather exemplify this “heaviness.”
雖有榮觀，燕處超然。榮觀，謂宮闕。燕處，后妃所居也。超然，遠避而不處也。
“Even when there are glorious things to behold, and comfortable places to stay, he overcomes his urges”
“Glorious things to behold” refers to palatial towers. “Comfortable places to stay” refers to the residences of (foreign) queens. “He overcomes his urges” means that he stays far away from them, and does not spend any time there.
奈何萬乘之主,奈何者，疾時主傷痛之辭。萬乘之主謂，王者。
“And what about the master of ten thousand chariots”
The injuries committed during his era would be spoken of painfully. The master of ten thousand chariots refers to the ruler.
而以身輕天下？王者至尊，而以其身行輕躁乎。疾時王奢恣輕淫也。
“If he himself is light, (ungrounded,) and easily carried away by the world?”
Will rulers be venerated if they are “light,” (ungrounded,) and easily carried away by restlessness? Their era will suffer if they are extravagant and indulgent, ungrounded, and licentious.
輕則失臣，王者輕淫則失其臣，治身輕淫則失其精。
“As a result of this ‘lightness,’ his ministers are lost”
Rulers who are flippant and licentious lose their ministers. To become “light” and licentious while governing the body results in loss of vital essence.
躁則失君。王者行躁疾則失其君位，治身躁疾則失其精神也。
“As a result of their restlessness, rulers are lost”
Rulers who become restless will lose the throne. To become restless while governing the body results in loss of spiritual vitality.

TWENTY-SIX

In Chapter 26, Heshang Gong again shows the tradition of internal medicine and health preservation that surrounded many of the early teachings found in the *Dao De Jing*. Rulers and ministers are shown to represent the mind and body, much as they were throughout the *Huang Di Nei Jing*. “Heaviness brings lightness back to the root” also pertains to chapter 16 and the practice of sitting in silence and stillness[67] as a way to reconnect with one’s pure nature and destiny-life-force. By allowing our energies, organs, and thereby emotions,

to settle, we can secure the essences and spiritual vitalities that will scatter when disturbed by strong emotions and desires. This nourishes both the mind and body, fostering a greater capacity to correlate information and be successful in one's endeavours[68] – all important capacities for a leader, whether as a leader of others or of one's own life.

~ 27 ~

Excellent walking leaves no trail of footprints
Excellent speech is without fault or blame
Excellent counting does not use counting devices
Excellent closing requires no bolts
Yet the seal cannot be broken
Excellent binding requires no rope to secure it
Yet cannot be unbound

In this way the wise of unrelenting virtue rescue people
Therefore nobody is abandoned
Unrelenting virtue saves things
Therefore nothing is abandoned
This is called “capturing light”
Therefore, those who are excellent
Are models for those who are not excellent
Those who are not excellent
Are valued as assets by those who are excellent
Those who do not value their teachers
Those who do not care for their assets
To consider these people wise would be a great illusion
It is correct to say that this is essential to the secret of life

Chapter 27
巧用 Employing Skill

善行無轍迹，善行道者求之於身，不下堂，不出門，故無轍迹。
“Excellent walking leaves no trail of footprints”
Those who are excellent at walking the Dao seek it in themselves, and do not go down to the hall or out of the gates. Thus, they leave no trail of footprints.
善言無瑕讁，善言謂擇言而出之，則無瑕疵讁過於天下。
“Excellent speech is without fault or blame”
Excellent speech means choosing words and imparting them without the world finding fault or blame in them.

善數不用籌策，善以道計事者，則守一不移，所計不多，則不用籌策而可知也。
“Excellent counting does not use counting devices”
Those who are excellent at finding a strategy to attain Dao simply guard Oneness within and do not shift from it. Their strategies are not numerous, and so they do not use counting devices to know them all.
善閉無關楗而不可開,善以道閉情欲、守精神者，不如門戶有關楗可得開。
“Excellent closing requires no bolts yet the seal cannot be broken”
For excellence in the way of sealing off desires and strong emotions, guard the spiritual vitality within and do not be like gates and doors. Locked bolts can be opened.
善結無繩約而不可解。善以道結事者，乃可結其心，不如繩索可得解也。
“Excellent binding requires no rope to secure it, yet cannot be unbound”
Achieve excellence by tying Dao into your usual affairs. Then you can tie it to your heart. This is to not use ropes and cords, which can be untied.

是以聖人常善救人，聖人所以常教人忠孝者，欲以救人性命。
“In this way the wise of unrelenting virtue rescue people”
Sages always teach (the selflessness of) loyalty and filial piety, hoping to rescue people’s pure nature (xing) and destiny-life-force (ming).
故無棄人；使貴賤各得其所也。
“Therefore nobody is abandoned”
Both rich and poor are employed.
常善救物，聖人所以常教民順四時者，欲以救萬物之殘傷。
“Unrelenting virtue saves things”
Sages always teach people to obey the four seasons, desiring to save the myriad things from injury and waste.
故無棄物。聖人不賤名而貴玉視之如一。
“Therefore nothing is abandoned”
Sages do not take common things for granted while cherishing what is precious, but rather, they see them equally as one.
是謂襲明。聖人善救人物，是謂襲明大道。
“This is called ‘capturing light’”
Sages are good at rescuing people and things. This is called capturing the light of the Great Dao.

故善人者，不善人之師；人之行善者，聖人即以為人師。
“Therefore, those who are excellent are models for those who are not excellent”
People who practice excellence are quick to follow the Sages’ teachings.
不善人者，善人之資。資，用也。人行不善者，聖人猶教導使為善，得以給用也。
“Those who are not excellent are valued as assets by those who are excellent”
Valued as assets, here, means that they are useful. Those who do not practice excellence, the sages teach and guide, making them excellent so that they can be useful.

不貴其師，獨無輔也。
“Those who do not value their teachers”
Who leave them alone and without assistance.
不愛其資, 無所使也。
“Those who do not care for their assets”
Who do not put them to good use.
雖智大迷，雖自以為智。言此人乃大迷惑。
“To consider these people wise would be a great illusion”
If people such as this still consider themselves wise, Lao Zi says that they have deluded themselves.
是謂要妙。能通此意，是謂知微妙要道也。
“It is correct to say that this is essential to the secret of life”
If you can penetrate this idea, this is what it means to know the subtlest mystery and essential secret of Dao.

TWENTY-SEVEN

The skills described in the beginning of chapter 27 may symbolize the Sage’s vital yet undetectable influence as a leader and teacher. He crosses someone’s path but does not entice them to follow him (travelling without footprints); corrects a person’s thinking without their realizing they were corrected (speaking without blame); reveals many faults without mentioning them (counting without counting devices); gets a person to change their behaviour without stifling their freedom (locking without bolts); does not force his own influence, yet this influence is inescapable (tying without ropes).

These skills are necessary for the Sage to steer proud and powerful people away from their chosen path, and entice them to choose one that serves the greater good. It was often

the job of a Sage to give their council to people with thousands of soldiers at their beckon call. To point out such a person's errors would always be like dancing on the foot of a cliff; yet, doing so was at least as important as it was dangerous, and so the self-restraint, wisdom, and genuine virtue of a Sage was of great importance to traversing these precipices successfully.

Zhuang Zi (c. 300 BC), in one of his many fictional tales, tells the story of an envoy seeking advice from Confucius on how to avoid punishment when meeting with such a dangerous and tyrannical king:

> Yan Hui said: "… By doing what other's do, they have no basis to blame me. This is called being a fellow disciple. Maintaining the ways of antiquity is to be a disciple of antiquity. Though my words of instruction may point out the ruler's errors, they will be the words of antiquity and not my own. As such, though being direct, they will not be insulting. This is called being a disciple of the ancients. Will this suffice?"
> Confucius replied: "Most certainly not! You have too many conditions and policies. You plan to go to [the tyrannical ruler of Wei] having yet to learn anything about him. Though your plan is firm, you will only avoid transgression. Stopping at that, how can you successfully convert him? You are only using your mind as the teacher."

Having mercy on Yan Hui, Confucius imparts the way of "heart-mind fasting" (xin zhai), one of the basic practices of Daoist meditation that helps to absorb the influence of Virtue and thereby increase spiritual intelligence (shen ming). It may be this power and influence, gained through purifying the heart-mind, that Lao Zi refers to when describing the Sage's mysterious methods in chapter 27. Confucius continues:

> "… You must be of singular focus. Do not listen with the ears, but listen with the heart-mind; do not listen with the heart-mind, but listen with the breath. Listening (then) stops in the ears, and the heart-mind stops in its verifications. As for the breath, it is the emptiness which receives all things, and it is Dao which brings (all things) towards emptiness. *Emptiness* is the fasting of the heart-mind."[69]

As Heshang Gong comments above:

> Those who are excellent at finding a strategy to attain Dao simply guard Oneness within and do not shift from it. Their strategies are not numerous, and so they do not use counting devices to know them all.

~ 28 ~

Knowing the male, guard the female
And be a valley under Heaven
Be a valley under Heaven
And Virtue will never flee
But will return to her infant son

Knowing the white, guard the black
And be a guide for the world
Be a guide for the world
And Virtue will remain without wavering

Return to Wuji, Supreme Nothingness
Knowing glory, hold fast to humiliation
And be a valley under Heaven
Being a valley under Heaven
Virtue will always fulfill you

Return to your unaltered substance
Unaltered wood is shaped into vessels
Sages make use of this model
When acting in positions of leadership
Thereby, the greatest establishment is undivided

Chapter 28
反朴 Return to the Unaltered State

知其雄，守其雌，為天下谿。雄以喻尊，雌以喻卑。人雖自知其尊顯，當復守之以卑微，去雄之強梁，就雌之柔和，如是則天下歸之，如水流入深谿也。

“Knowing the male, guard the female, and be a valley under Heaven”
The male is a metaphor for receiving honour. The female is a metaphor for being humble. While it may be obvious that they are venerated, people should hold onto humility and smallness. Leave the male’s power and rigidity, and approach the female’s gentle harmony. Then all under Heaven will return to you like water currents flow into deep valleys.

為天下谿，常德不離，人能謙下如深谿，則德常在，不復離於己。
“Be a valley under Heaven, and Virtue will never flee”
In people who can humble and lower themselves like mountain streams, Virtue will always exist and never again leave them.
復歸於嬰兒。當復歸志於嬰兒，憃然而無所知也
“But will return to her infant son”
Return to the intentions of an infant son – his playful nature is without knowledge.
知其白守其黑，為天下式。白以喻昭昭，黑以喻默默。人雖自知昭昭，明白當復守之以默默，如闇昧無所見，如是則可為天下法式，則德常在。
“Knowing the white, guard the black, and be a guide for the world”
White is a metaphor for intense brightness. Black is a metaphor for quiet stillness. Though someone may know that they are full of light, they should understand the white while holding onto quiet stillness, close themselves within a darkness which cannot be seen, and be well aligned (with Dao). This enables them to be a standard and guide for the world. Then Virtue will always be with them.
為天下式，常德不忒，人能為天下法式，則德常在於己，不復差忒。
“Be a guide for the world, and Virtue will remain without wavering”
When someone can be a standard and guide for the world, Virtue will always be with them, unwaveringly.
復歸於無極。德不差忒，則常生久壽，歸身於無窮極也。
“Return to Wuji, Supreme Nothingness”
When Virtue does not waver, it always brings long life and reconnects the body to that which is without any exhaustible limit.
知其榮，守其辱，為天下谷。榮以喻尊貴，辱以喻污濁。人能知己之有榮貴，當復守之以污濁，如是則天下歸之，如水流入深谷也。
“Knowing glory, hold fast to humiliation, and be a valley under Heaven”
Knowing praise refers to respect and honour. Reproof refers to unworthiness. If you can, knowing your own respectability and value, return and hold fast to your unworthiness (lit. foul muddiness), all under Heaven will return to you like water currents flow to deep valleys.
為天下谷，常德乃足,足，止也。人能為天下谷，則德乃常止於己。
“Being a valley under Heaven, Virtue will always fulfill you”
To be fulfilled is to come to rest. To people who can be (empty, open, and nourishing like) a valley under Heaven, Virtue will always come to rest.

復歸於樸。復當歸身於質樸，不復為文飾。
“Return to your unaltered substance”
Return yourself to the unaltered state. Do not go on covering yourself with ornamentation.
樸散則為器，器，用也。萬物之樸散則為器用也。若道散則為神明，流為日月，分為五行也。
“Unaltered wood is shaped into vessels”
Vessels are useful. The simplicity of the myriad things is altered to make useful tools. Similarly, the Dao makes alterations in order to create spiritual intelligence, the alterations of day and night, and the separation of the five elemental phases.
聖人用之則為官長。聖人升用則為百官之元長也
“Sages make use of this model when acting in positions of leadership”
Using only a few ounces of leadership, the Sage plays the role of one hundred leaders.
故大制不割。聖人用之則以大道制御天下，無所傷割，治身則以大道制御情欲，不害精神也。
“Thereby, the greatest establishment is undivided”
The Sage uses (leaders). Thereby, the Great Dao is established in managing all under Heaven without causing harm or division.

In governing the body, when the Great Dao is established it drives out desires and strong emotions (so that they) do not injure the spiritual vitality.

TWENTY-EIGHT

Only in humility can we know simplicity. Without humility we cannot abstain from ornamenting ourselves, and without abstaining from ornamenting ourselves, we cannot return to simplicity. Simplicity (pu) is the unaltered state by which one receives Virtue and accumulates spiritual radiance. Without the obstruction of self-ornamentation, without getting in our own way by falling into egoic emotional battles that only serve to protect these false ornamentations, original essence (yuan jing) may be transformed to bring about spiritual intelligence and lead us to fulfill destiny.

~ 29 ~

The wish to possess all under Heaven
And control it
I see this has no end
The world is an instrument of the gods
It cannot be controlled
Those who try, spoil it
Those who grasp, lose

Hence, sometimes leading, sometimes following
Sometimes breathing in through the nose
Sometimes breathing out through the mouth
Sometimes strong
Sometimes weak
Sometimes chopping down
Sometimes being destroyed

Therefore, the wise abstain from excess, abstain from exaggeration, and abstain from exaltation

Chapter 29
無為 Effortlessness (Wu Wei)

將欲取天下, 欲為天下主也。
“The wish to possess all under Heaven”
The wish to rule all under Heaven.
而為之，欲以有為治民。
“And control it”
The wish to have control of, and govern, the people.
吾見其不得已。我見其不得天道人心已明矣，天道惡煩濁，人心惡多欲。
“I see this has no end”
I see that this cannot be obtained. Heaven’s Dao and people’s hearts are too intelligent! Heaven’s Dao dislikes trouble and contamination. People’s hearts dislike too much desire.

天下神器，不可為也。器，物也。人乃天下之神物也，神物好安靜，不可以有為治。
“The world is an instrument of the gods. It cannot be controlled”
The instrument, here, refers to “beings” – humans become spirit beings on the earth. Spirit beings like peace and tranquility; they do not like to be forcibly governed.
為者敗之，以有為治之，則敗其質性。
“Those who try, spoil it”
By trying to force and control the world, they spoil its pure nature and substance.
執者失之。強執教之，則失其情實，生於詐偽也
“Those who grasp, lose”
If you try to forcibly hold and indoctrinate the population, their true feelings will be lost and they will become artificial and deceitful.

故物或行或隨，上所行，下必隨之也。
“Hence, sometimes leading, and sometimes following”
Superiors lead, and those below must follow them.
或歔或吹，歔，溫也。吹，寒也。有所溫必有所寒也。
“Sometimes breathing in through the nose, and sometimes breathing out through the mouth”
Breathing in through the nose means warming; breathing out through the mouth means cooling. If there is warming, there must be cooling.
或強或羸，有所強大，必有所羸弱也。
“Sometimes strong, and sometimes weak”
When there is strength and greatness, there must also be weakness and adaptability.
或挫或隳。載，安也。隳，危也。有所安必有所危，明人君不可以有為治國與治身也。
“Sometimes chopping down, sometimes being destroyed”
There is both support of peace, and destruction and danger. If there is peace, there must be danger. Enlightened rulers do not try to forcibly control the nation but follow the way of governing the body.

是以聖人去甚，去奢，去泰。甚謂貪淫聲色。奢謂服飾飲食。泰謂宮室臺榭。去此三者，處中和，行無為，則天下自化。

“Therefore, the wise abstain from excess, abstain from exaggeration, and abstain from exaltation”
Excess means wanton and licentious music and prostitutes. Exaggeration means fancy clothes, drinks, and food. Exaltation means lofty towers and pavilions.

By abstaining from these three, remaining internally harmonious and effortless in activity, all under Heaven will reform itself.

TWENTY-NINE

The guidance in chapter 29 is reminiscent of the *Yijing* and Chinese martial strategy: knowing one’s limits is of utmost importance when attempting to leverage one’s power. A leader seeking harmony within the nation and within themselves must appreciate that dominance and force cannot engender this harmony. Thereby can they stive towards the Daoist political goal of bringing about voluntary cooperation.

A nation that reflects the ambitions of its people does not need punishments to obtain compliance. The people of such a nation take pride in something they feel they are a part of and helped to create. Knowing this, the sage leader avoids pride and extraneous desires so as to rid himself of any temptation to neglect or abuse the people while aggrandizing himself.

~ 30 ~

As for those who use Dao to counsel the king
It is not by weapons that they have power in the world
Such activities are reciprocated
Where troops gather, thorns and brambles appear
Following war, there is sure to be famine and misfortune
Large armies are sure to bring sadness in the future
Achieve your aim well, and then stop
Do not dare to abuse power
Achieve your aim, but do not boast
Achieve your aim, but do not attack again
Achieve your aim, but do not become arrogant
Achieve your aim, but do not claim all the credit
Achieve your aim, but do not abuse power
Things thrive in their prime and then become aged
This is called “not Dao”
What is “not Dao” ends prematurely

Chapter 30
儉武 Limiting Militancy

以道佐人主者，謂人主能以道自輔佐也。
“As for those who use Dao to counsel the king”
This means that the king can use Dao to protect and counsel himself.
不以兵強天下。以道自佐之主，不以兵革，順天任德，敵人自服。
“It is not by weapons that they have power in the world”
By Dao, the king can counsel himself. Then, without using weapons and armour but by submitting to Heaven and trusting in Virtue, his enemies will surrender themselves.
其事好還。其舉事好還自責，不怨於人也。
“Such activities are reciprocated”
If he accepts responsibility for harmonizing himself, he will not be hated by others.
師之所處，荊棘生焉。農事廢，田不修。

“Where troops gather, thorns and brambles appear. Following war, there is sure to be famine and misfortune”
Agriculture is forgotten and the fields cannot be cultivated.
大軍之後，必有凶年。天應之以惡氣，即害五穀，盡傷人也。
“Large armies are sure to bring sadness in the future”
Heaven responds to this with a malicious breath that destroys the five grains. This exhausts and injures the people.
善有果而已，善用兵者，當果敢而已，不美之。
“Achieve your aim well, and then stop”
With proper employment of the military, results should be won and the campaign then stopped and not indulged in.
不敢以取強。不以果敢取強大之名也。
“Do not dare to abuse power”
Do not, after winning results, try to gain a reputation of great strength.
果而勿矜, 當果敢謙卑，勿自矜大也。
“Achieve your aim, but do not boast”
When results have been won, be humble and do not boast and aggrandize yourself.
果而勿伐，當果敢推讓，勿自伐取其美也。
“Achieve your aim, but do not attack again”
When results have been won, move forward or pull back, but do not become proud and conceited.
果而勿驕，驕，欺也。果敢勿以驕欺人。
“Achieve your aim, but do not become arrogant”
Arrogant, here, means deceitful. Achieve results but do not become arrogant and deceitful.
果而不得已，當過果敢至誠，不當逼迫不得已也
“Achieve your aim, but do not claim all the credit”
If you exceed your aim, remain honest. Do not bully anyone, nor claim all the credit.
果而勿強,果敢勿以為強兵、堅甲以欺凌人也。
“Achieve your aim, but do not abuse power”
Achieve your aim without using the power of the military, and do not hide behind your armour to cheat and insult others.
物壯則老，草木壯極則枯落，人壯極則衰老也。言強者不可以久。
“Things thrive in their prime and then become aged”

Grass and trees become fully grown and then dry out and fall; people reach their prime and then decline until death. So it is said, “the forceful cannot live long.”
是謂不道。枯老者，坐不行道也。
“This is called ‘not Dao’”
Drying out and aging is not how one practices Dao.
不道早已。不行道者早死。
“What is ‘not Dao’ ends prematurely”
Those who do not practice Dao, die prematurely.

THIRTY

In providing excellent guidance on how to prevent backlash after ending a conflict, Lao Zi draws an image of barren fields. This serves to remind that even “successful” conflicts have consequences. For example, someone may enjoy arguments and pride themselves on their ability to trounce their opponents, but in doing so may alienate everyone around them and end up desolate. Thus, we must be careful not to indulge in contentious impulses, and be careful of how and where we fight our battles, lest we destroy the vitality of our own fields, both internally and externally.

~ 31 ~

Elegant weapons are instruments of ill omen
All beings should despise them
Therefore, those who have Dao do not stay with them
The superior man (junzi) prefers to stay on the left
But those who use weapons prefer the right
Weapons are not instruments of good omen
They are not instruments of the junzi
If an attacker cannot be stopped, and weapons are used
To be calm and unemotional is considered most important

If victory is then won, do not be pleased
For to be pleased with this would be to celebrate murder
Anyone who celebrates murder
Is not capable of obtaining the will of the world!

For auspicious matters they [junzi] stay on the left
For ominous matters, (the junzi) stay on the right
When the low ranking officer is on the left
And the high ranking officer is on the right
This is said to observe the rites of mourning
When many people are killed
This is cause for sympathy and mourning
Victory in war
Is also cause for the mourning rites to be observed

Chapter 31
偃武 Putting Away Militancy

夫佳兵者，不祥之器，佳，飾也。祥，善也。兵者，驚精神，濁和氣，不善人之器也，不當修飾之。
“Elegant weapons are instruments of ill omen”
Elegant, here, means decorative. Ill omen, here, means not good. Weapons startle the spiritual vitality and contaminate the energy-breath. They are not the good man’s instrument, for he does not cultivate decoration.
物或惡之，兵動則有所害，故萬物無有不惡之者。
“All beings should despise them”

When weapons are employed, they cause injury. This is why the myriad things hate them.
故有道者不處。有道之人不處其國。
“Therefore, those who have Dao do not stay with them”
Those who have Dao do not remain in violent nations.
君子居則貴左，貴柔弱也。
“The superior man (junzi) prefers to stay on the left”
He maintains softness and flexibility.[70]
用兵則貴右。貴剛強也，此言兵道與君子之道反，所貴者異也。
“But those who use weapons prefer the right”
They prefer the rigid and inflexible. This is to say that the way of the soldier moves opposite to the way of the junzi. What they prefer is different.
兵者，不祥之器，兵，革者。不善之器也。
“Weapons are not instruments of good omen”
Weapons and armour are not instruments of good.
非君子之器，非君子所貴重之器也。
“They are not instruments of the junzi”
They are not instruments that the junzi favours.
不得已而用之。謂遭衰逆亂禍，欲加萬民，乃用之以自守。
“If an attacker cannot be stopped, and weapons are used”
This is referring to when the state is in decline and a rebellion then results in chaos and disaster – when all the people’s desires have multiplied and you must do something to protect yourself.
恬淡為上。不貪土地，利人財寶。
“To be calm and unemotional is considered most important”
Do not be greedy for land, nor profit by taking people’s possessions and valuables.

勝而不美，雖得勝而不以為利己也。
“If victory is then won, do not be pleased”
Even though attaining victory, do not take things for yourself.
而美之者，是樂殺人。美得勝者，是為喜樂殺人者也。
“For to be pleased with this would be to celebrate murder”
Those who are pleased after attaining victory act as though they enjoy and celebrate murder.

夫樂殺人者，則不可以得志於天下矣。為人君而樂殺人者，此不可使得志於天下矣，為人主必專制人命，妄行刑誅。
“Anyone who celebrates murder is not capable of obtaining the will of the world!”
Acting as though a junzi yet celebrating murder, one will never be able to obtain the will of the world! Acting like a king requires a human being to establish the will of Heaven. It would be absurd, then, for that person to execute people.

吉事尚左，左，生位也。
“For auspicious matters they [junzi] stay on the left”
The left is the position of life.[71]
凶事尚右，陰道殺人。
“For ominous matters, (the junzi) stay on the right”
The yin side of Dao is deadly.
偏將軍居左，偏將軍卑而居陽者，以其不專殺也。
“When the low ranking officer is on the left”
The low rank of an officer is humble. It resides here in the yang position, and so is not tasked with killing.
上將軍居右。上將軍尊而居陰者，以其專主殺也。
“And the high ranking officer is on the right”
The high rank of an officer is respected. He resides in the yin position here, and so is responsible for the king’s execution orders.
言以喪禮處之。上將軍居右，喪禮尚右，死人貴陰也。
“This is said to observe the rites of mourning”
The high ranking officer is on the right. In funeral rites, he customarily stays on the right because the dead prefer yin.

殺人之眾，以哀悲泣之；傷己德薄，不能以道化人，而害無辜之民。
“When many people are killed, this is cause for sympathy and mourning”
One does injury to themselves when their Virtue is weak. They cannot reform people by Dao, and they kill people who have committed no crime.
戰勝，以喪禮處之。古者戰勝，將軍居喪主禮之位，素服而哭之，明君子貴德而賤兵，不得以而誅不祥，心不樂之，比於喪也，知後世用兵不已故悲痛之。
“Victory in war is also cause for the mourning rites to be observed”

In ancient times, when a battle was won, a Master of Ceremony conducted official funeral rites. People wore plain clothing and wept. The enlightened junzi valued virtue and not weapons. He did not take up these instruments of ill omen to execute people, and did not celebrate in his heart. These were the funeral rites. They knew that the use of weapons would not stop in the future, and so were sad and mournful.

THIRTY-ONE

"Elegant weapons" symbolize an attempt to treat violence as something attractive and pleasant. This is a dangerous attitude to have, especially for someone leading others, as it makes light of the cost that violence inevitably brings to the lives and culture of those involved.

As Daoists observe and prepare for change, constantly training themselves to adapt, they also have a rich history of martial skills. However, the focus of Daoist martial arts (Tai Ji, Bagua Zhang, Xing Yi) is preserving life. Aside from teaching how to protect oneself from an attacker, they teach ideal body alignment, inner tranquility, and are often taught alongside the healing arts of Chinese medicine. Thus, Daoist training in martial arts does not glorify dominance, but rather self-sufficiency, knowing that while we may occasionally encounter physical threats of violence, the challenge to overcome our inner limitations will be offered every single day.

Just as a Sage does not ornament himself but tries to stay true to his pure nature, he would not try to turn violence into some sort of dazzling and venerable undertaking. Similarly, "If an attacker cannot be stopped, and weapons are used, to be calm and unemotional is considered most important."

~ 32 ~

The Way is always without name
Simple, and seemingly insignificant
Nothing in the world can subordinate it
If lords and kings would embrace it
The myriad things would willingly submit to them
Heaven and Earth would unite
And sweet dew would descend
The people would be given no commands
Yet they would willingly treat each other as equals

When the beginning was established, names came into being
When this naming began, it was too late
Even before things are known
Know them
Thereby, you will not be endangered

Just as Dao exists in the world
Valley streams flow into the ocean

Chapter 32
聖德 Wisdom and Virtue

道常無名，道能陰能陽，能弛能張，能存能亡，故無常名也。
“The Way is always without name”
Dao has the power of yin, the power of yang, the power of looseness, the power of tension, the power of life, and the power of death. Therefore, it is without a constant name.
樸雖小，天下莫能臣也。道樸雖小，微妙無形，天下不敢有臣使道者也。
“Simple, and seemingly insignificant, nothing in the world can subordinate it”
Dao is simple and seemingly insignificant. Infinitesimal and mysterious, it is without form. Nothing in the world dares to subordinate it, and so it is Dao.

侯王若能守之，萬物將自賓。侯王若能守道無為，萬物將自賓，服從於德也。
“If lords and kings would embrace it, the myriad things would willingly submit to them”
If lords and kings could embrace the effortlessness of Dao, the myriad things would willingly submit to them. Their Virtue would then spread far and wide.
天地相合，以降甘露，侯王動作能與天相應和，天即降下甘露善瑞也。
“Heaven and Earth would unite, and sweet dew would descend”
When lords and kings move into action in accord with Heaven, they ensure harmony. Heaven then descends sweet dew as a most auspicious omen.
民莫之令而自均。天降甘露善瑞，則萬物莫有教令之者，皆自均調若一也。
“The people would be given no commands, yet they would willingly treat each other as equals”
Heaven would descend sweet dew as an auspicious omen, and without needing to be taught, the myriad things would treat each other as equals – transforming in accord with Oneness.

始制有名，始，道也。有名，萬物也。道無名能制於有名，無形，能制於有形也。
“When the beginning was extablished, names came into being”
“The beginning” refers to the Dao. “Names came into being,” refers to the myriad things. Dao is without name, yet can establish what has names. Dao is without form, yet can establish what has forms.
名亦既有，既，盡也。有名之物，盡有情欲，叛道離德，故身毀辱也。
“When this naming began, it was too late”
Too late, here, means near the end. Putting names (and reputations) on things leads to desires and strong emotions as a result of them – to rejecting Dao, and abandoning Virtue. Thereby oneself is brought to ruin.
夫亦將知之。人能法道行德，天亦將自知之。
“Even before things are known”
People can align with Dao and act in accordance with Virtue. In this way they will know Heaven in themselves.
知之，所以不殆。天知之，則神靈祐助，不復危怠。

“Know them. Thereby, you will not be endangered”
When the Way of Heaven is known, spiritual forces bring protection and aid, and there is no return to the dangerous state of neglecting (the Way of Heaven).
譬道之在天下，猶川谷之與江海。譬言道之在天下，與人相應和，如川谷與江海相流通也。
“Just as Dao exists in the world – valley streams flow into the ocean”
This is a metaphor to say that Dao’s presence in the world brings people together in harmony, just like valley streams flow together into the ocean where they are united.

THIRTY-TWO

Like the body’s ongoing changes towards homeostasis, Dao is not so much a thing as a dynamic process. As such, trying to understand Dao as a thing with a name is akin to referring to the changing balance of hot and cold in a room. We can say “warm” or “cool,” but these static descriptions actually refer to a constantly changing process.

The end of chapter 32 (“When the beginning was established, names came into being”) can be read as guidance to clear the mind and know Oneness. Knowing Oneness within, we can be open to, and embrace, all. Virtue (De) nourishes all things and nurtures their fruition. Finding this peace and vitality within, we can practice the way of Virtue.

Virtue does not distinguish and favour, but brings Dao to all beings and things (if such distinctions can be made). To practice Dao is also to find this Oneness in all things. As such, external practices of Daoism include cultivating forbearance and emotional moderation, accepting that our place may sometimes be low and sometimes be high while acting accordingly and without contempt.

~ 33 ~

Those who know others, are wise
Those who know themselves, are clear-sighted
Those who overpower others, have strength
Those who overpower themselves, have fortitude
Those who know contentment, are rich
Those who exercise this fortitude, have will-power
Those who do not lose their station, continue
Those who die but do not disappear, live long

Chapter 33
辯德 Dispute and Virtue

知人者智，能知人好惡，是為智。
“Those who know others, are wise”
Those who can know others’ likes and dislikes are wise.
自知者明。人能自知賢與不肖，是為反聽無聲，內視無形，故為明也。
“Those who know themselves, are clear-sighted”
Those who can know their own worthiness and unworthiness – this is to turn around and listen to what has no voice, and look within at what has no form. This is to be clear-sighted.
勝人者有力，能勝人者，不過以威力也。
“Those who overpower others, have strength”
The ability to overpower others is no more than showing off might and physical strength.
自勝者強。人能自勝己情欲，則天下無有能與己爭者，故為強也。
“Those who overpower themselves, have fortitude”
When a person has overcome their emotions and desires, nothing in the world can make this person contend with them. Hence, they are powerful.
知足者富，人能知足，則長保福祿，故為富也。
“Those who know contentment, are rich”
When a person knows how to be content, they enjoy lasting happiness and blessings. Hence they are rich.

強行者有志，人能強力行善，則為有意於道，道亦有意於人。
“Those who exercise this fortitude, have will-power”
Those who exercise fortitude and strength with good (intentions) put their intention with Dao, while Dao also puts its intention with them.
不失其所者久，人能自節養，不失其所受天之精氣，則可以長久 。
“Those who do not lose their station, continue”
Those who can nurture a connection within themselves, and not lose their place to receive Heaven’s vital energy-breath, will continue for a very long time.
死而不亡者壽。目不妄視，耳不妄聽，口不妄言，則無怨惡於天下，故長壽。
“Those who die, but do not disappear, live long”
When the eyes do not observe frantically, the ears do not listen frantically, and the mouth does not speak frantically, there will be no blame or hatred of the world. Thus, lifespans will be long.

THIRTY-THREE

Chapter 33 helps to dispel a persistent myth that the cultivation of effortlessness (wu wei) and natural spontaneity (zi ran) amounts to little more than idleness and self-indulgence. Quite to the contrary, Daoist monks and priests exemplify self-restraint in their commitment to spiritual and physical refinement. Attempting to transcend desire, selfishness, intense emotional states, physical limitations, and the ever-present allures of praise and fame, the guiding ropes of one’s sail must never slip from the hand of internal awareness.

~ 34 ~

Oh how the Great Dao is overflowing
It can go both left and right
When the myriad things trust in it
They live, and are not refused
It accomplishes its work
Yet makes no name for itself
It loves and raises the myriad things
Yet does not act as their master

Always without wants, it can be known by its smallness
All things return to it yet it does not act as their master
It can be known by its greatness
Therefore, when finishing, Sages' actions are not grandiose
Thus, they can complete what is great

Chapter 34
任成 Trust and Completion

大道氾兮，言道氾氾，若浮若沉，若有若無，視之不見，說之難殊。
"Oh how the Great Dao is overflowing"
The Dao is flooding; overflowing; covering; submerging; As though present; as though absent. It cannot be seen through observation. To describe it is unusually difficult.
其可左右。道可左可右，無所不宜。
"It can go both left and right"
Dao can be on both the left and the right. It has no place that is out of place.
萬物恃之而生，恃，待也。萬物皆待道而生。
"When the myriad things trust in it, they live"
"Trust," here, means rely. The myriad things all rely on Dao to give them life.
而不辭，道不辭謝而逆止也。
"And are not refused"
Dao does not refuse (the myriad things), nor does it stop (supporting them).
功成不名有，有道不名其有功也。

“It accomplishes its work, yet makes no name for itself”
The Dao does not try to make itself known, though it has accomplishments.
愛養萬物而不為主。道雖愛養萬物，不如人主有所收取。
“It loves and raises the myriad things, yet does not act as their master”
Dao only loves[72] and raises the myriad things. Unlike man, it does not try to act as their master and take possession of them.

常無欲，可名於小。道匿德藏名，怕然無為，似若微小也。
“Always without wants, it can be known by its smallness”
Dao, in concealing its Virtue, hides from notoriety. It seems as though small and afraid to take action.
萬物歸焉而不為主，萬物皆歸道受氣，道非如人主有所禁止也。
“All things return to it, yet it does not act as their master”
All things return to Dao and receive energy-breath. Unlike man, Dao does not try to master things and keep them from rest.
可名為大。萬物橫來橫去，使名自在，故可名於大也。
“It can be known by its greatness”
Over every land, the myriad things come and go. They make the Dao known by their very existence. Thus it can be known by its greatness.
是以聖人終不為大，聖人法道匿德藏名，不為滿大。
“Therefore, when finishing, Sages’ actions are not grandiose”
Sages follow the way of Dao. They conceal their virtue and hide from notoriety; they are not extravagant.
故能成其大。聖人以身師導，不言而化，萬事修治，故能成其大。
“Thus, they can complete what is great”
Sages lead by example. Without having to speak, they reform things, influencing them to study and cultivate balance. Through this potent influence, they complete great things.

THIRTY-FOUR

The Dao is immeasurable, and thus too is the capacity of its primordial force: De, Virtue. Where the ambition of Daoists may be most present is in modelling their behaviour after the Dao itself, seeking to embody and invest in themselves the effortlessness of its beneficence.

While benevolence in a person requires the desire, meaning, or inclination to do good, Dao benefits life without any desire, meaning, or inclination. It does so simply by doing what Dao does. Thus, it does not expect recognition for doing so any more than we expect

to be thanked for running into someone on the street. As such, benevolence does not even apply, yet everything Dao does fulfills the needs of life.

~ 35 ~

By holding onto the great image
The world is put into motion
When it is put into motion and harm is not inflicted
Tranquility and stability reach their ultimate

Joyful music and sweets entice passing travelers to stop
When Dao appears in the mouth
Like water, it is without taste
Looking at it, it is not seen
Listening to it, it is not heard
Using it, it is not used up

Chapter 35
仁德 The Virtue of Benevolence

執大象，天下往。執，守也。象，道也。聖人守大道，則天下萬民移心歸往之也。治身則天降神明，往來於己也。
“By holding onto the great image, the world is put into motion”
“Holding onto,” here, means holding close. “Image,” here, means Dao. The Sage holds the Great Dao close to him, and everything in the world shifts its heart to the way things once were. He governs his body and Heaven sends down spiritual lights (shen ming) which go back and forth between his body (and Heaven).
往而不害，安平太。萬民歸往而不傷害，則國家安寧而致太平矣。治身不害神明，則身安而大壽也。
“When it is put into motion and harm is not inflicted, tranquility and stability reach their Ultimate”
When the myriad people return to the way that things once were, and do not inflict harm, the nation will be tranquil, serene, and arrive at supreme peace. When governing the body, do not harm the spiritual intelligence. Then the body will be peaceful and have a great lifespan.

樂與餌，過客止，餌，美也。過客，一也。人能樂美於道，則一留止也。一者，去盈而處虛，忽忽如過客。
“Joyful music and sweets entice passing travelers to stop”
“Sweets” refers to pleasantness. “Passing travelers” refers to Oneness. When people enjoy the pleasantness of Dao, Oneness comes to visit. Oneness leaves fullness, and remains in emptiness, spontaneously and suddenly like the passing traveller.
道之出口，淡乎其無味，道出入於口，淡淡非如五味有酸鹹苦甘辛也。
“When Dao appears in the mouth, like water, it is without taste”
When Dao goes into the mouth, it is like water. It is not like the five flavours: sour, salty, bitter, sweet, and pungent.
視之不足見，足，得也。道無形，非若五色有青黃赤白黑可得見也。
“Looking at it, it is not seen”
Zu 足 is an alternate of de 得 (which would function here as a grammatical particle). Dao is without form. It does not resemble the five colours: blue, green, yellow, red, white, and black. It cannot be seen.
聽之不足聞，道非若五音有宮商角徵羽可得聽聞也。
“Listening to it, it is not heard”
Dao does not resemble the five tones: gong (doh), shang (ray), jue (me), zhi (so), yu (la).[73] It cannot be heard.
用之不足既。既，盡也。謂用道治國，則國安民昌。治身則壽命延長，無有既盡之時也。
“Using it, it is not used up”
This means that when Dao is used to govern a nation, the nation is peaceful and the people are radiant. When Dao is used to govern the body, aging is delayed and one’s destined lifespan is extended indefinitely.

THIRTY-FIVE

Heshang Gong specifies that it is enjoyment of the pleasantness of Dao that brings Oneness to visit a gathering, community, or nation. Dao in this instance may refer to the absence of want – the harmony, ease, and cooperation between individuals, and the presiding radiance of spirit that increases upon the lasting decorum of those assembled.[74] It was, in part, to preserve this unity that Confucius resolved to scrutinize ritual, etiquette, music and harmony, proprieties of social hierarchy, righteousness, and justice. In the *Book of Music*, Confucius establishes:

> Knowing the fluctuations that occur at our deepest roots is the essence of music; the bearing of one's sincerity and abstaining from all artifice is the sacredness of ceremony. Ceremony and music adhere to the essence of Heaven and Earth; they bring forth the virtues of the spiritual lights (shen ming); they bring down and raise up the spirits from above and below; they give substance to what is intangible and tangible, and guide the right relationships between father and son, ruler and minister.[75]

Both Heshang Gong and Confucius share the ancient cosmology that a gathering pervasive with harmony is presided over by fortunate spirits. Confucius notes that sincerity devoid of artifice is integral to true ceremony, much as Lao Zi paints benevolence, etiquette and righteousness as artificial efforts to return to the natural Oneness and harmony of Dao. This sentiment of unpretentiousness, naturalness, and the spirit that presides when people commune as such, might also be reflected in Lao Zi's subtle description of a fortuitous and warm encounter:

> When Dao appears in the mouth,
> Like water, it is without taste
> Looking at it, it is not seen
> Listening to it, it is not heard
> Using it, it is not used up

~ 36 ~

Those wishing to draw in, first set up expansion
Those wishing for there to be weakness, first set up power
Those wishing for there to be failure, first set up success
Those wishing to rob, first set up allegiance
This is called minimalist intelligence

The soft and yielding win over the rigid and inflexible
Fish should not leave the cover of deep waters
The state's sharp instruments should not be revealed

Chapter 36
微明 The Intelligence of Minimalism

將欲歙之，必固張之。先開張之者，欲極其奢淫
"Those wishing to draw in, first set up expansion"
If at first they are open and stretched, desires will extend to extravagance and licentiousness.
將欲弱之，必固強之。先強大之者，欲使遇禍患
"Those wishing for there to be weakness, first set up power"
If at first they are great and powerful, their desires will bring about disaster and suffering.
將欲廢之，必固興之。先興之者，欲使其驕危。
"Those wishing for there to be failure, first set up success"
If at first they are successful, their desires will bring about arrogance and danger.
將欲奪之，必固與之。先與之者，欲極其貪心。
"Those wishing to rob, first set up allegiance"
If at first they are accepted, their desires will extend to a greedy mind.
是謂微明。此四事，其道微，其效明也。
"This is called minimalist intelligence"
These four operations use minimalist method and effective intelligence.

柔弱勝剛強。柔弱者久長，剛強者先亡也。

“The soft and yielding win over the rigid and inflexible”
The soft and yielding last the longest; the tough and rigid are first to die.
魚不可脫於淵，魚脫於淵，謂去剛得柔，不可復制焉。
“Fish should not leave the cover of deep waters”
Taking fish out of water refers to abandoning rigidity and attaining softness. [76] Should one not return to this principle?
國之利器，不可以示人。利器者，謂權道也。治國權者，不可以示執事之臣也。治身道者，不可以示非其人也。
“The state’s sharp instruments should not be revealed”
“Sharp instruments” refers to the Dao of power. Those who govern a nation should not display their political strategies. The Dao of governing the self should not be revealed to the wrong sorts of people.

THIRTY-SIX
Illustrating again the paradoxical effects of self-serving efforts, Lao Zi notes some common political tactics of his day. During the Warring States Period of China (c. 475-221 BC) as throughout history all around the world, states were constantly attacking, aiding, betraying, and aligning with each other, making shrewd diplomacy of utmost value. Though chapter 36 is saturated with Daoist philosophy, the tactics mentioned within it were likely borrowed from commonplace strategies of the day, presented here as evidence that desire is one’s greatest vulnerability, and self-aggrandizing efforts one’s greatest folly.[77] These examples of self-defeat also show that the best strategy is to simply follow Dao and allow its power – Virtue – to guide success. This means putting aside thoughts of personal gain and acting according to what benefits the greater community – in other words, simply staying out of destiny’s way to see what the harmony of Dao will bring.

~ 37 ~

The Dao is always effortless yet without inaction
When lords and kings can guard this within
The myriad things eventually transform themselves
Transforming, yet desiring to do so intentionally
I pacify this desire with the simplicity of the nameless

The simplicity of the nameless removes all desires
When the tranquility of desirelessness is established
The world stabilizes itself

Chapter 37
為政 Active Government

道常無為而無不為。道以無為為常也。
“The Dao is always effortless yet without inaction”
The Dao’s effortlessness is always active.
侯王若能守之，萬物將自化。言侯王若能守道萬物將自化效於己也。
“When lords and kings can guard this within, the myriad things eventually transform themselves”
When lords and kings can hold on to Dao, the myriad things progress and transform themselves by their own power.
化而欲作，吾將鎮之以無名之樸。吾，身也。無明之樸，道德也。萬物已化效於己也。復欲作巧偽者，侯王當身鎮撫以道德也。
“Transforming yet desiring to do so intentionally, I pacify this desire with the simplicity of the nameless”
“I,” here, means within his body. Dao and Virtue are invisible in their unaltered simplicity. The myriad things transform themselves by their own power. When the desire to interfere through skillful artifice returns, lords and kings should pacify and soothe it with Dao and Virtue.

無名之樸，夫亦將無欲。不欲以靜，言侯王鎮撫以道德，民亦將不欲，故當以清靜導化之也。

“The simplicity of the nameless removes all desires. When the tranquility of desirelessness is established”
When lords and kings pacify and soothe (the desire to interfere) with Dao and Virtue, the people also stop desiring. Thus, clarity and tranquility must guide their transformation.
天下將自定。能如是者，天下將自正定也。
“The world stabilizes itself”
Those who can be like this, help the world to align and stabilize itself.

THIRTY-SEVEN

The term *wei*(為 , doing, being) suggests acting with *willfulness*, which Dao and De do not have. Thus, Dao is without *wei*, yet always effective. De is Dao’s effectiveness, or simply Dao’s *effect*, always active like the energy of a cosmic and perpetual energy-source. If people can absorb Dao’s energetic essence[78] and follow its spontaneous nature, they can be without desire and willfulness yet perpetually effective. This offers the seeming paradox of removing desire in order to attain completion and perfection in oneself and in the nation. Such a way of being is described in the Duke of Zhou’s comment (c. 1100 BC) on the first line of the first hexagram (Heaven) in the Yi Jing (I Ching): “Heaven moves with vitality. The junzi therefore sturdies himself to ceaseless activity.”[79] As Heshang Gong comments in chapter 65, ”to follow Heaven is to unite with Virtue.”

A common reaction to the idea of transcending personal desires might be, “but if I don’t serve my own desires, what am I doing here? I am completely insignificant!” In fact, we may be completely insignificant; no more significant than a mayfly in the grand universal scheme of things, despite the religious cosmologies that help to make us feel important in an inconceivably immense universe.

Paradoxically, this insignificance would only stem from our individuality. While we may be extremely significant to other beings on this planet, as individuals we are inconceivably miniscule in our vast universe. However, by uniting with the Great Dao, we become part of the Dao, we act from the Dao, we express the universe and the universe expresses us. In this way, our lives are connected to the One Existence beyond existence – Dao.

Chapter 25 makes clear how we can live with this connection, showing that humankind follows Earth, Earth follows Heaven, and Heaven follows Dao. Observing the changes that take place in the earth as it adapts to those of Heaven, we can learn how to follow Heaven, and thus Dao. This includes following the seasons and transformations of nature, life, and events, and utilizing the natural leverage afforded to us by the power and effectiveness of Dao – De, Virtue. If we must find meaning in life, we may find it in uniting with the Great Nature (Heaven), the Virtue of Dao, and the spontaneous essentiality of existence. To find our connection to this path, road, or stream, is to find life’s ultimate consequence.

Volume Two
De: The Virtue (of Nature)
德

~ 38 ~

Highest virtue is not (noticeably) virtuous
Therefore it has Virtue
Lower virtue is unmistakably virtuous
Therefore it is without Virtue

Highest Virtue is without action
It does not exist by its actions
Lower virtue takes action
It exists because of its actions

Highest benevolence takes action
Yet does not exist by its actions
Highest righteousness takes action
And exists because of its actions
Highest etiquette takes action
And when its obligations are not met
People are taken by the arm and forced to obey

Thus, when Dao is lost, virtue appears
When virtue is lost, benevolence appears
When benevolence is lost, righteousness appears
When righteousness is lost, etiquette appears

In etiquette, sincerity and selflessness are lacking
And this is the beginning of chaos
This trajectory can be recognized
When people who don't know
Display flowery appearances of the Dao
And speak as though they know how to recognize what is coming
This is the beginning of idiocy

Therefore, great and noble men stay with what is substantial
And not with what is slight
They stay with the fruit
And not with the flower
They leave that and choose this

Chapter 38

論德 Discourse on Virtue

上德不德，上德，謂太古無名號之君，德大無上，故言上德也。不德者，言其不以德教民，因循自然，養人性命，其德不見，故言不德也。
“Highest virtue is not (noticeably) virtuous”
This refers to the virtue of the rulers of great antiquity who were without fame or title. Their virtue was great and without superior. Thus, it is called “highest virtue.”

To say that it was “not (noticeably) virtuous” means that they did not teach the people virtues, but caused them to follow their natural spontaneity, thereby supporting the development of their pure nature (xing), and destiny-life-force (ming). Their virtue was not put on display. Thus, Lao Zi describes it as “not (noticeably) virtuous.”
是以有德。言其德合於天地，和氣流行，民德以全也。
“Therefore it has Virtue”
This refers to the Virtue which unites Heaven and Earth. Its harmonious energy-breath flows and circulates, refining Virtue in the people.
下德不失德，下德，謂號謚之君，德不及上德，故言下德也。不失德者，其德可見，其功可稱也
“Lower virtue is unmistakably virtuous”
Lower virtue refers to that which is signified by an honorary title. This cannot equal the highest virtue, and so is called lower virtue. It is “unmistakably virtuous,” which means that such virtue is put on display, and accomplishments are officially recognized.
是以無德。以有名號及其身故。
“Therefore it is without Virtue”
It is but a name attributed to an individual.

上德無為，謂法道安靜，無所施為也。
“Highest Virtue is without action”
This means that the character of Dao is peaceful, still, and without intentional actions.
而無以為，言無以名號為也。
“It does not exist by its actions”
It is without name or recognition for its actions.
下德為之，言為教令，施政事也。

“Lower virtue takes action”
(Lower virtue) acts by teaching, giving commands, and carrying out duties.
而有以為。言以為己取名號也。
“It exists because of its actions”
Its actions create reputations and titles.

上仁為之,上仁謂行仁之君，其仁無上，故言上仁。為之者，為人恩也。
“Highest benevolence takes action”
“Highest benevolence” refers to the benevolent actions of a ruler. His benevolence has no superior. Thus it is called highest benevolence. He actively treats all people with kindness and charity.
而無以為，功成事立，無以執為。
“Yet does not exist by its actions”
When his achievements have been completed as required by his position, there is no attachment to those actions.
上義為之, 為義以斷割也。
“Highest righteousness takes action”
It acts in the name of righteousness by interrupting and dividing.
而有以為。動作以為己，殺人以成威，賊下以自奉也。
“And exists because of its actions”
It moves out of self-interest, kills people to create an air of power, robs those below, and serves only itself.
上禮為之，謂上禮之君，其禮無上，故言上禮。為之者，言為禮制度，序威儀也。
“Highest etiquette takes action”
This refers to the highest etiquette of a ruler without superior(s). Thus it is called highest etiquette. It is active because it standardizes etiquette according to hierarchy and ceremony.
而莫之應，言禮華盛實衰，飾偽煩多，動則離道，不可應也。
“And when its obligations are not met”
This is to say that flowery displays of class and refinement are artificial and create much tension. This moves away from the Dao, and so cannot be necessary.
則攘臂而扔之。言禮煩多不可應，上下忿爭，故攘臂相仍引。
“People are taken by the arm and forced to obey”

Etiquette causes many unnecessary tensions. When people are taken by the arm and forced to obey these rules, it creates hostility and competition between authorities and subordinates.
故失道而後德，言道衰而德化生也。
“Thus, when Dao is lost, virtue appears”
When Dao declines, permutations of Virtue arise.
失德而後仁，言德衰而仁愛見也。
“When virtue is lost, benevolence appears”
When virtue declines, benevolence and love are put on display.
失仁而後義，言仁衰而分義明也。
“When benevolence is lost, righteousness appears”
When benevolence declines, righteousness is clearly distinguished.
失義而後禮。言義衰則失禮聘，行玉帛也。
“When righteousness is lost, etiquette appears”
When righteousness declines, it is lost to etiquette and gifts of jade and silk.

夫禮者，忠信之薄,言禮廢本治末，忠信日以衰薄。
“In etiquette, sincerity and selfless loyalty are lacking”
This implies that etiquette discards the root and focuses on the branches, causing sincerity and selfless loyalty to gradually weaken.
而亂之首。禮者賤質而貴文，故正直日以少，邪亂日以生。
“And this is the beginning of chaos”
Etiquette is of cheap substance and wealthy appearance. As a result, honour gradually declines while wickedness and chaos arise.
前識者，道之華不知而言知為前識，此人失道之時，得道之華。
“This trajectory can be recognized when people who don’t know display flowery appearances of the Dao, and speak as though they know how to recognize what is coming”
This is how people lose the right timing of Dao while taking on flowery appearances of Dao.
而愚之始。言前識之人，愚闇之倡始也。
“This is the beginning of idiocy”
This is to say that foolhardy fortune tellers begin to lead people blindly.

是以大丈夫處其厚，大丈夫謂得道之君也。處其厚者，謂處身於敦樸。
“Therefore, great and noble men stay with what is substantial”

“Great and noble people” refers to rulers who have attained Dao. “Staying with what is substantial” means keeping one’s character candid and plain.
不居其薄，不處身違道，為世煩亂也。
“And not with what is slight”
They do not keep themselves in opposition to Dao, as this would cause tension and chaos in the world.
處其實，處忠信也。
“They stay with the fruit”
They maintain sincerity and selfless loyalty.
不居其華。不尚華言也。
“And not with the flower”
They are not in the habit of using flowery words.
故去彼取此。去彼華薄，取此厚實。
“They leave that, and choose this”
They leave the flowery and lacking, and choose what is substantial – they choose the fruit.

THIRTY-EIGHT

Heshang Gong interprets chapter 38 as depicting a ruler’s De, and its effect on his or her people. When a ruler’s virtue is put on display, it teaches the people to emulate, rather than abide in their own pure nature. Teaching otherwise satisfied people about the superiority of this or that behaviour causes them to take pride in demonstrating their newfound superiority, and lose the true Virtue inherent in their pure nature (xing). To have left them without such knowledge would have saved them from re-evaluating their self-esteem according these demonstrations of newly acquired superior attributes. Now robbed of the pure nature and former wellspring of their simplicity, they focus on shaping themselves according to these new measurements. This opens them up to tarnishing their natural perfection with conceit and foolish pride. Thus, leaders should not put too much effort into teaching people how to emulate heroes, but rather allow them to discover the inborn Virtue of which they are all in possession. Further, if the ruler’s virtue is exceptional, it will affect others without having to intentionally demonstrate it.

Chapter 38 also includes what appears to be a reference to divination, expressing incredulity rather than esteem for divination practices presumably connected to the Yi Jing (Book of Changes) – another important book in the Daoist tradition. Lao Zi describes a pattern of departure from Dao and Virtue which eventually reaches the point of reliance on divination to determine how events will turn out. Lao Zi’s thoughts, here, would then correlate closely to those found in the *Bai Xin* (*Purifying the Heart-Mind*, attributed to Guan Zi and dated to 700 BC or 350 BC, according to tradition or scholars, respectively[80]):

> "Not by the day or the month, but by how affairs follow (Dao), and not by prophesy or divination, but by how cautiously one follows (Dao), can you know their fortune or misfortune."[81]

This dismissal of diviners may otherwise simply express that these diviners have lost Dao, and so are incapable of such foresights. As Guigu Zi (Master of Ghost-Valley, circa 250 BC) explains in his chapter, *Seven Techniques of Yin Talisman*:

> Consolidating intention refers to contemplative energy. The heart-mind desires peace and quiet. Contemplation desires depth and breadth. When the heart-mind is peaceful and silent, spiritual foresight arises. When contemplation is deep and broad, strategic plans are refined. When spiritual foresight arises, the will should not be disturbed. When strategic plans are refined, success will not be denied.[82]

~ 39 ~

In the beginning was the attainment of Oneness

Heaven attained Oneness
And became clear
Earth attained Oneness
And became serene
Gods attained Oneness
And became spiritually powerful
Valleys attained Oneness
And became full
The myriad things attained Oneness
And were born
Lords and kings attained Oneness
And all under Heaven became loyal

Then occurred the following

Heaven, lacking the cause of its clarity
Began to tremble and split open
Earth, lacking the cause of its serenity
Became fearful and began to gush forth
The gods, lacking the cause of their spiritual power
Became fearful and stopped moving
The valley, lacking the cause of its fullness
Became fearful and began to drain
The myriad things, lacking the cause of their life
Became fearful and began to die out
The lords and kings, lacking the cause of their being praised and elevated
Became fearful and began to fall

Therefore, value the lowest and treat it as the root source
Elevate the low and treat it as the foundation

This is why lords and kings
Call themselves orphans, widows
And "no hub-of-the-wheel"
Is this not treating the lowest as the root source?
Is it not?
Thus, they are sent several palanquins without a palanquin

Have no desires for fine jade
Nor for cheap necklaces and stones

Chapter 39
法本 Guided by the Root

昔之得一者：昔，往也。一，無為，道之子也。
“In the beginning was the attainment of Oneness”
“Begin,” here, means “from the outset.” Oneness is effortless – a child of Dao.

天得一以清，言天得一故能垂象清明。
“Heaven attained Oneness and became clear”
Heaven attained Oneness and was thereby able to send down images of clarity and brilliance.
地得一以寧，言地得一故能安靜不動搖。
“Earth attained Oneness and became serene”
Earth attained Oneness and was thereby able to remain peaceful and still, not moving or shaking.
神得一以靈，言神得一故能變化無形。
“Gods attained Oneness and became spiritually powerful (ling)”
Gods attained Oneness and were thereby able to transform without form.
谷得一以盈，言谷得一故能盈滿而不絕也。
“Valleys attained Oneness and became full”
Valleys attained Oneness and were thereby able to fill until overflowing without cease.
萬物得一以生，言萬物皆須道以生成也。
“The myriad things attained Oneness and were born”
The myriad things all followed Dao and lived their full lifespans.
侯王得一以為天下貞。言侯王得一故能為天下平正。
“Lords and kings attained Oneness, and all under Heaven became loyal”
Lords and kings attained Oneness and were thereby able to make the entire world peaceful and honourable.

其致之。致，誠也。謂下六事也。
“Then occurred the following”

This is a warning, referring to the following six incidents.
天無以清將恐裂，言天當有陰陽弛張，晝夜更用，不可但欲清明無已時，將恐分裂不為天。
“Heaven, lacking the cause of its clarity, began to tremble and split open”
Heaven has both yin and yang, laxity and tension, day, night, and other workings. It should not want clarity and brilliance without cease, and so became fearful and divided, no longer acting like Heaven.
地無以寧將恐發，言地當有高下剛柔，節氣五行，不可但欲安靜無已時，將恐發泄不為地。
“Earth, lacking the cause of its serenity, became fearful and began to gush forth”
Earth has both high and low, hard and soft, and joins the energy-breaths of the five elemental phases. It should not want only peace and stillness without cease, and so became fearful and began to gush and flow, no longer acting like Earth.
神無以靈將恐歇，言神當有王相囚死休廢，不可但欲靈變無已時，將恐虛歇不為神。
“The gods, lacking the cause of their spiritual power, became fearful and stopped moving”
The gods are both kings and prisoners of an unending death. They should not want to be only spiritually powerful and transforming without cease, so they became fearful and lost their power to move, no longer acting like gods.
谷無以盈將恐竭，言谷當有盈縮虛實，不可但欲盈滿無已時，將恐枯竭不為谷。
“The valley, lacking the cause of its fullness, became fearful and began to drain”
The valleys were full, filling their emptiness with wealth. They should not want to continue filling without cease, and so became fearful and dried out until empty, no longer acting like the valleys.
萬物無以生將恐滅，言萬物當隨時生死，不可但欲長生無已時，將恐滅亡不為物。
“The myriad things, lacking the cause of their life, became fearful and began to die out”
The myriad things followed the seasons of birth and death. They should not want for long life without cease, and so became fearful and began to die out, no longer acting like living things.

侯王無以貴高將恐蹶。言侯王當屈己以下人，汲汲求賢，不可但欲貴高於人無已時，將恐顛蹶失其位。
“The lords and kings, lacking the cause of their being praised and elevated, became fearful and began to fall”
The lords and kings bent themselves down to serve the people, and drank abundantly from the well of Virtue. They should not want to be praised and elevated by the people without cease, and so became fearful, fell from the summit, and lost the throne.

故貴以賤為本，言必欲尊貴，當以薄賤為本，若禹稷躬稼，舜陶河濱，周公下白屋也。
“Therefore, value the lowest and treat it as the root source”
This is to say that it is necessary for those who are highly honoured to treat the weak and low as the root source. This is like King Yu becoming the minister of agriculture and personally sowing the grain, like King Shun digging clay and making pottery, or like the Duke of Zhou humbling himself at simple dwellings.
高以下為基,言必欲尊貴，當以下為本基，猶築牆造功，因卑成高，不下堅固，後必傾危。
“Elevate the low and treat it as the foundation”
This is to say that those who are highly honoured must treat the low as the root foundation. This is similar to building a wall. Preparing well, begin low so as to end high. If you do not lend strength to the low, the future will surely overflow with danger.

是以侯王自謂孤、寡、不轂。孤寡喻孤獨，不轂喻不能如車轂為眾輻所湊。
“This is why lords and kings call themselves orphans, widows, and ‘no hub-of-the-wheel’”
Being an orphan is a metaphor for being alone. Not being the hub of the wheel is a metaphor for not being able to unite the masses like spokes in a wheel.
此非以賤為本邪？言侯王至尊貴，能以孤寡自稱，此非以賤為本乎，以曉人？
“Is this not treating the lowest as the root source?”
This is to say that lords and kings attain honour by calling themselves orphans and widows. Is this not treating the low as the root, and thereby

understanding others?
非乎！嗟嘆之辭。
“Is it not?”
This is an expression of admiration.

故致數輿無輿，致，就也。言人就車數之為輻、為輪、為轂、為衡、為轡，無有名為車者，故成為車，以喻侯王不以尊號自名，故能成其貴。
“Thus, they are sent several palanquins without a palanquin”
“Sent,” here means that they approach. This is to say that one approaches (the making of) a cart by making spokes, making wheels, making wheel hubs, making measurements, and taking blame for errors; yet, those who make the cart have no fame. Thus, completing the construction of a cart is a metaphor for lords and kings who, by not giving themselves reverential titles and names, make themselves worthy of praise.

不欲琭琭如玉，珞珞如石。琭琭喻少，落落喻多，玉少故見貴，石多故見賤。言不欲如玉為人所貴，如石為人所賤，當處其中也。
“Have no desires for fine jade, nor for cheap necklaces and stones”
Fine jade is a metaphor for scarcity, while cheap necklaces are a metaphor for surplus. Jade is scarce and thus is seen as valuable. Stones are abundant and thus they are seen as cheap. This is to say that we should not want to be like jade, which people value highly, nor like stones which people find worthless, but rather stay in between these two.

THIRTY-NINE

The character kong (恐), repeated several times in chapter 39, translates as fear, and is written by combining the characters for heart (below) and binding (above), meaning that the heart is constricted with fear. Heshang Gong explains that the fears described in chapter 39 were a result of excessive desire. Though all was plentiful, a fear persisted that continuous accumulation was needed and this fear resulted in a loss of the very peace, unity, and contentment that made this plenitude possible. As with chapter 23, the teachings of chapter 39 may be rooted in the ancient Chinese science of *resonance response* (gan ying) – the same system of natural synchronicities that gave birth to the elemental phase correlations of Chinese medicine. Chapter 23 teaches that trust brings trust: by unifying with Dao, Dao will join with you. Chapter 39 teaches that if you do not allow yourself to unify with Dao, Dao will leave you.[83] Chapter 39 may also indicate that when chapter 23

refers to loss ("Those who are one with loss, loss is also happy to have them") it refers to this loss of Oneness described in chapter 39.

As in chapter 39, the *Dao De Jing* teaches that one of the greatest obstacles to unifying with Dao is the need for recognition. It is often difficult for people to accept that they cannot take credit for the comforts that they enjoy; as such, they cannot find humility, they cannot follow the teaching of chapter 28:

> Knowing glory, hold fast to humiliation
> And be a valley under Heaven
> Being a valley under Heaven
> Virtue will always fulfill you
>
> Return to your unaltered substance
> Unaltered wood is shaped into vessels
> Sages make use of this model
> When acting in positions of leadership
> Thereby, the greatest establishment is undivided

~ 40 ~

Returning! The movement of Dao
Gentle! The employment of Dao
Everything in the world is born from what is
What is, is born from what is not

Chapter 40
去用 Abandoning and Using

反者道之動，反，本也。本者，道之所以動，動生萬物，背之則亡也。
“Returning! The movement of Dao”
“Returning” means returning to the root. From here, the Dao moves, and its movement gives birth to the myriad things. Refusing this brings death.
弱者道之用。柔弱者，道之所常用，故能常久。
“Gentle! The employment of Dao”
Adaptive and gentle: the Dao always operates in this way and thus always endures.
天下萬物生於有，天下萬物皆從天地生，天地有形位，故言生於有也。
“Everything in the world is born from what is”
Everything in the world is born from Heaven and Earth. Heaven and Earth are the seat of form. Therefore, Lao Zi says “born from what is.”
有生於無。天地神明，蜎飛蠕動，皆從道生。道無形，故言生於無也。此言本勝於華，弱勝於強，謙虛勝盈滿也。
“What is, is born from what is not”
Heaven and Earth have spiritual intelligence (spiritual brilliance), as do even mosquitos, flies, and wasps. All things trace their birth back to Dao. Dao is without form. Therefore, Lao Zi says “born from what is not.” This explains why the root overcomes the flower, the soft overcomes the hard, and the humble and empty overcome the full and satisfied.

Returning to the formless, the mind returns to yi, the facet of mind that precedes will and thought – a pure openness, void of desire and naming, like and dislike, good and bad. From formlessness comes form. This openness is the crucible of internal cultivation, where acquired self is returned to original self of no-self – the formlessness from which all selves we create, in order to function in this world of selves, emerge. Emptiness, formlessness, One, Dao.

Water has no shape and so it can take on all shapes. Reflecting this formlessness allows us to move through the world like water, slipping through every crack and wearing away every mountain before we can be defeated.[84]

~ 41 ~

When the highest student hears the Way
Diligently, he treads the path
When the mediocre student hears the Way
At first present, he falls back
When the lowest student hears the Way
He breaks into a great laugh
If he did not laugh
It wouldn't be the path

Thus, such sayings have been established:
The illuminated path appears dark
The path forward seems to go back
The level path appears uneven
The highest virtue, low as a valley
Great purity appears disgraced
Magnanimous virtue appears insufficient
Deep Virtue appears easily detached
True substance seems to change
Great squares are without corners
Great vessels develop slowly
Great voices rarely speak
Great images are without form

The Way is hidden and without name
Yet kindly lends itself
To our fruition

Chapter 41
同異 Similarity and Difference

上士聞道，勤而行之。上士聞道，自勤苦竭力而行之。
"When the highest student hears the Way**,** diligently he treads the path"
When the highest student hears of the Dao, he gathers his resolve and expends every effort to persevere through the difficulties of practicing it.
中士聞道，若存若亡。中士聞道，治身以長存，治國以太平，欣然而存之，退見財色榮譽，惑於情欲，而復亡之也。

“When the mediocre student hears the Way, at first present, he falls back”
When the mediocre student hears of the Dao, he governs himself to live long; governs the nation to achieve great peace; and is naturally joyful in his life. Taking a step backwards in his cultivation, he looks at wealth and appearances, glory, and fame. His resolve becomes confused by desires and strong emotions, and he moves back again towards death.
下士聞道，大笑之。下士貪狠多欲，見道柔弱，謂之恐懼，見道質樸，謂之鄙陋，故大笑之。
“When the lowest student hears the Way, he breaks into a great laugh”
The lowest student is greedy, cruel, and lascivious. Seeing softness and flexibility as cowardice, and what is simple and natural as low and unattractive, he breaks into laughter.
不笑不足以為道。不為下士所笑，不足以名為道
“If he did not laugh, it wouldn’t be the path”[85]
If they did not make the lowest student laugh, the names used to describe the Path would not be sufficient.

故建言有之：建，設也。設言以有道，當如下句
“Thus, such sayings have been established”
“Established,” here, means well established – the well established sayings about Dao in the following sentences.
明道若昧，明道之人，若闇昧無所見。
“The illuminated path appears dark”
Enlightened men of Dao seem oblivious, in the dark, and without vision.
進道若退，進取道者，若退不及。
“The path forward seems to go back”
Advancing to attain Dao is like going backwards and not attaining it.
夷道若類。夷，平也。大道之人不自別殊，若多比類也。
“The level path appears uneven”
“Level,” here, means peaceful. The great man of Dao does not separate himself as being different or special, yet seems to be many different things.
上德若谷，上德之人若深谷，不恥垢濁也。
“The highest virtue, low as a valley”
A man of the highest virtue is like a deep valley. He is not ashamed of dirt and mud.
大白若辱，大潔白之人若汙辱，不自彰顯。
“Great purity appears disgraced”

A man of great cleanliness and purity seems as though filthy and ashamed. He does not make a clear display of himself.
廣德若不足，德行廣大之人，若愚頑不足也。
“Magnanimous virtue appears insufficient”
The man whose virtue is shown through acts of great magnanimity seems as though foolish, stubborn, and not satisfied.
建德若偷，建設道德之人，若可偷引使空虛也。
“Deep Virtue appears easily detached”
When Dao is well established in a man of virtue, it seems as though his virtue could be extracted or stolen, leaving him hollow and empty.
質真若渝，質樸之人，若五色有渝淺不明也。
“True substance seems to change”
A man of simplicity and naturalness appears to change colours on the surface, as though he does not have much depth, and is not enlightened.
大方無隅，大方正之人，無委屈廉隅。
“Great squares are without corners”
Great men who are square and true do not let an appointment to office bend them. They remain honourable in every corner of their being.
大器晚成，大器之人，若九鼎瑚璉，不可卒成也
“Great vessels develop slowly”
Men who are great vessels (of Virtue) are like tributary bronze cauldrons, or coral grain bowls. They never wear out.
大音希聲，大音猶雷霆待時而動，喻當愛氣希言也。
“Great voices rarely speak”
Great voices are like cracks of thunder. They wait for the right time and then act. This is a metaphor for cherishing energy-breath and thus speaking rarely.
大象無形，大法象之人，質樸無形容。
“Great images are without form”
Great men who model themselves in the image of Dao remain simple, natural, and without any apparent form.

道隱無名。道潛隱，使人無能指名也。
“The Way is hidden and without name”
The Dao is concealed and hidden. People are incapable of pointing to, or naming, it.
夫惟道，善貸且成。成，就也。言道善稟貸人精氣，且成就之也。

“Yet kindly lends itself to our fruition”
“Fruition,” here, means “to be approached.” This is to say that Dao kindly endows people with its own vital energy-breath, thereby bringing them towards completion.

FOURTY-ONE

At the risk of ruining every joke ever told, European philosophers of the 17th and 18th century traced humour to a common event called “incongruous juxtaposition” – that is, the juxtaposition of circumstances into a category of which at least one of those circumstances does not fit. On realizing this incongruity, humour is the separation of the congruous and incongruous elements. This resolution is generally the impetus of all jokes (Lord help us).

In the case of chapter 41’s contrasting opposites, the lowest student might laugh on hearing such things as “great squares are without corners, great images are without form,” and to find out that the most noble of people, the Sage, is so seemingly simple, unrefined, and unimposing. The Sage is not likely to be hurt by the laughter of the low students, however, for he knows that life is made of the high and low, big and small, and that they do not all so easily fit together in the mind that is already full of names and categories. This is simply the way that people often are. They may stare, and they may gawk, but they will eventually move on to some other amusement, and the Sage will continue on his journey, knowing by now that this too is the Dao.

While chapter 41 depicts the unity of opposites in Dao, it can also be applied to Daoist cultivation of the heart-mind. This cultivation is based largely in turning the heart-mind back to the formlessness of intention (yi) – an awareness that precedes the formation of will and thought. Chapter 41 may also hint at this grasping of the subtlety and formlessness behind our will and thoughts, a note that may be more pronounced by contrasting chapter 41 with chapter 32, in which Lao Zi describes the formlessness preceding names:

> When the beginning was established, names came into being
> When this naming began, it was too late
> Even before things are known
> Know them
> Thereby, you will not be endangered
> Just as Dao exists in the world
> Valley streams flow into the ocean

~ 42 ~

Dao gave birth to the One
The One gave birth to Two
Two gave birth to Three
Three gave birth to the myriad things

The myriad things carry the Yin principle (on their backs)
While embracing the Yang principle (in front of them)
They are infused with energy-breath
And made to be harmonious

People consider it terrible
To be orphaned, widowed, and outcast
Yet kings and elders refer to themselves in this way
This is because things sometimes diminish themselves
And then benefit
Sometimes benefit themselves
And are then diminished

When others teach
I also teach
Those who use brute force obtain only death
I take this as the father of my teaching

Chapter 42
道化 The Transformations of Dao

道生一，道使所生者一也。
“Dao gave birth to the One”
Dao sent forth life, and there was Oneness.
一生二，一生陰與陽也。
“The One gave birth to Two”
The One gave birth to Yin and Yang.
二生三，陰陽生和清濁，三氣分為天地人也。
“Two gave birth to Three”

Yin and Yang gave birth to the harmony between clear and opaque. This separated into three energy-breaths, creating Heaven, Earth, and Humanity.
三生萬物。天地人共生萬物也，天施地化，人長養之也。
“Three gave birth to the myriad things“
Heaven, Earth, and Humanity gave life to the myriad things. Heaven bestows upon them and Earth transforms them. Humanity leads them and helps them grow.

萬物負陰而抱陽，萬物無不負陰而向陽，迴心而就日。
“The myriad things carry the Yin principle (on their backs), while embracing the Yang principle (in front of them)”
The myriad things always carry yin and face towards yang. Though they may turn around, their hearts and minds go towards the sun.
沖氣以為和。萬物中皆有元氣，得以和柔，若胸中有藏，骨中有髓，草木中有空虛與氣通，故得久生也。
“They are infused with energy-breath, and made to be harmonious”
Inside of all things is the original energy-breath (yuan qi), attained through harmony and softness. If it is concealed in the breast, it will also be within the bone marrow, just as it is in plants and trees in the empty hollows where energy-breath circulates. Thereby (do all things) obtain long life.

人之所惡，惟孤、寡、不穀，而王公以為稱。孤寡不轂者，不祥之名，而王公以為稱者，處謙卑，法空虛和柔。
“People consider it terrible to be orphaned, widowed, and outcast, yet kings and elders refer to themselves in this way”
“Orphan,” “widow,” and “outcast” are not auspicious names, yet kings and elders refer to themselves with them. By remaining humble and modest, this hollowness and emptiness allows them to be harmonious and flexible.
故物或損之而益，引之不得，推之必還。
“This is because things sometimes diminish themselves and then benefit”
Trying to extract may not obtain anything, but offering may result in a return.
或益之而損。夫增高者志崩，貪富者致患。
“Sometimes benefit themselves and are then diminished”
Those who increase their grandeur have an unstable will. Their greed for wealth makes them suffer worries.

人之所教，謂眾人所教，去弱為強，去柔為剛。
“When others teach”
The masses are taught to abandon flexibility and be inflexible – to abandon gentleness and be rigid.
我亦教之。言我教眾人，使去強為弱，去剛為柔
“I also teach”
Lao Zi is saying “I teach the masses to abandon inflexibility and be flexible – to abandon rigidity and be gentle.
強梁者不得其死，強梁者，謂不信玄妙，背叛道德，不從經教，尚勢任力也。不得其死者，為天命所絕，兵刃所伐，王法所殺，不得以壽命死。
“Those who use brute force obtain only death”
“Those who use brute force” refers to those who do not trust in the fathomless mystery – who turn their backs on, and rebel against, Dao and Virtue. They do not follow the teachings of the ancient classics, and so are compelled to rely on force.

They “obtain only death” because they cause Heaven to cut short their life and destiny. Soldiers attack them, and kings order their deaths. Without obtaining long life or destiny, they die.
吾將以為教父。父，使也。老子以強梁之人為教，誡之始也。
“I take this as the father of my teaching”
“Father,” here, means “the cause.” Lao Zi teaches those who use brute force by beginning with this warning.

FOURTY-TWO
While chapter 42 is commonly regarded as the principle revelation of Daoist cosmogony, Heshang Gong’s commentary has served as its definitive explanation. Lao Zi hints at his intended meaning of the One, Two, and Three by referring to the polarities of yin and yang (the only use of these terms in the entire text), and referring to energy-breath (qi, mentioned only in chapters 10, 42, and 55). As yin and yang are evidently the branching off of the One into Two, we can understand that One holds the unity and non-differentiation of yin and yang. By this we can also understand that Dao is not simply yin and yang, for Dao contains the undifferentiated Oneness which expresses *both* yin and yang. Heshang Gong explains:

> Yin and Yang gave birth to the harmony between clear and opaque. This separated into three energy-breaths, creating Heaven, Earth, and Humanity.

The clear and opaque are expressed in Heaven and Earth, ethereal and condensed, with all things falling somewhere within the spectrum of the two. This polar spectrum expresses a middle ground: qi (energy-breath), with Humanity encompassing the broad middle ground of the spectrum between Heaven and Earth.[86]

As explained in my introduction, on "Dao, De, and Oneness in Heshang Gong's Commentary," Heshang Gong adds an essential detail to his use of the term Oneness when he states in chapter 51:

> *"Virtue takes care of them"*
> "Virtue," here, means "Oneness." Oneness is the host of all things. It surrounds them with energy-breath, and gathers and rears things into form. Oneness establishes the form and image of all things.

So, we may rightly infer from this that "the One" in chapter 42 also refers to De, Virtue. Such a reading is consistent with descriptions of De as a nurturing force in chapter 51, and the spontaneous process of nurturing life that follows from the One, to Two, to Three in chapter 42, arriving at all things being infused with qi:

> *"They are infused with energy-breath, and made to be harmonious"*
> Inside of all things is the original energy-breath (yuan qi), attained through harmony and softness. If it is concealed in the breast, it will also be within the bone marrow, just as it is in plants and trees in the empty hollows where energy-breath circulates. Thereby (do all things) obtain long life.

Heshang Gong also comments on chapter 42 as it deals with conduct when Lao Zi suggests that emptiness attracts fullness ("things sometimes diminish themselves and then benefit"). This translates into the cultivation of qi through behaviour: if one can abstain from the self-entitlement of greed and anger, they facilitate a clear and peaceful spirit, resulting in a clear and peaceful physiology where the internal organs are unburdened by stressful emotions. With the heart calmly housing the spirit and thereby facilitating a balanced function of the other organs, this harmonious internal environment helps to preserve both mind and body. With the internal kingdom peacefully governed by an enlightened spirit, intention, habit, decisions, and lifestyle all contribute to fulfilling the positive destiny of this kingdom. This is to nurture life (yang sheng)[87] through conduct by abstaining from greed and anger. Removing the urge to think we are special or better than the rest, we allow Oneness, Virtue, to bring us into alignment and balance. As in the quote above, Heshang Gong teaches that qi is cultivated though harmony ("Inside of all things is the original energy-breath (yuan qi), attained through harmony and softness"). With this understanding of cultivating Oneness, the elusive complementarity between the four paragraphs of chapter 42 can be found.

~ 43 ~

The softest thing in the world
Runs through the hardest thing in the world
That which is without form
Penetrates that which is without spaces or cracks
I thereby know that there is benefit in effortlessness
And in teaching without words

The benefit of effortlessness
Restores hope for the world

Chapter 43
徧用 Pervasive and Useful

天下之至柔，馳騁天下之至堅。至柔者，水也。至堅者，金石也。水能貫堅入剛，無所不通。
“The softest thing in the world runs through the hardest thing in the world”
The softest thing is water. The hardest things are metal and stone. Water can go through what is tough and enter what is hard. There is nothing it cannot pass through.
無有入無間。無有謂道也。道無形質，故能出入無間，通神明濟群生也。
“That which is without form penetrates that which is without spaces or cracks”
“That which is without form” means Dao. Dao is without form or substance. Hence, it can leave and enter what is without spaces or cracks. When spiritual brilliance breaks through, the multitudes are born.
吾是以知無為之有益。吾見道無為而萬物自化成，是以知無為之有益於人也。
“I thereby know that there is benefit in effortlessness”
I see that Dao is effortless, yet the myriad things are naturally transformed and completed. Therefore, I know that effortlessness is beneficial to people.
不言之教，法道不言，師之以身。
“And in teaching without words”

The system of Dao is not spoken, but is learned through the body.
無為之益，法道無為，治身則有益於精神，治國則有益於萬民，不勞煩也。
“The benefit of effortlessness”
The system of Dao is effortless. By governing the body (with effortlessness), the spiritual vitality is benefited. By governing the nation (with effortlessness), things and people are benefited. Do not over-exert or agitate them.
天下希及之。天下，人主也。希能有及道無為之治身治國也。
“Restores hope for the world”
“The world,” here, means people and rulers. There is hope for them to attain Dao by governing the body, and governing the nation, with effortlessness.

FOURTY-THREE
Purifying the heart-mind allows the spirit to shine outward, to penetrate through dense emotional layers and illuminate our conscious mind with a higher perception of worldly circumstances. It breaks through the obstinate will fueled by anger, the urgencies of fear and elation, the habitual rumination of worry, and dense clouds of sorrow. Just as emotions are contagious, so too is spiritual brilliance. Thus, the Sage effortlessly connects with the spiritual intelligence of others, and rinses out the silt of their emotional habituation and thought patterns.

~ 44 ~

Reputation or yourself
Which do you hold most dear?
Yourself or your possessions
Which is of greater value?
To gain or to lose
Which does greater harm?

Strong craving assures great expense
Extensive hoarding assures substantial loss

Know what is sufficient, and you will not be disgraced
Know when to stop, and you will not be endangered
Thereby, you can endure

Chapter 44
立戒 Established Warnings

名與身孰親。名遂則身退也。
“Reputation or yourself, which do you hold most dear?”
When reputation takes precedence, character loses priority.
身與貨孰多。財多則害身也。
“Yourself or your possessions, which is of greater value?”
Having too many possessions causes harm to the individual.
得與亡孰病。好得利則病於行也。
“To gain or to lose, which does greater harm?”
The wish to acquire and profit brings contamination to one’s activities and behaviour.

甚愛必大費，甚愛色，費精神。甚愛財，遇禍患。所愛者少，所亡者多，故言大費。
“Strong craving assures great expense”
Strong cravings for beautiful appearances expend spiritual vitality. Strong cravings for material wealth bring misfortune and worries. Though only a

few things may be strongly craved, the losses will still be many. Hence the words “great expense.”
多藏必厚亡。生多藏於府庫，死多藏於丘墓。生有攻劫之憂，死有掘塚探柩之患。
“Extensive hoarding assures substantial loss”
Those who are alive store many things in municipal storehouses. Those who are dead store many things in burial mounds. The living are saddened when they are robbed. The dead are worried when grave robbers search their tombs.

知足不辱，知足之人絕利去欲，不辱於身。
“Know what is sufficient and you will not be disgraced”
People who know what is sufficient will regulate profits and abandon desires. They will not disgrace themselves.
知止不殆，知可止，則財利不累於身，聲色不亂於耳目，則身不危殆也。
“Know when to stop and you will not be endangered”
By knowing how to stop, wealth and profits will not disturb one’s character, sounds and appearances will not confuse the ears and eyes, and the body will not be endangered.
可以長久。人能知止足則福祿在己，治身者，神不勞；治國者，民不擾，故可長久。
“Thereby you can endure”
When people know how to stop at sufficiency, happiness and blessings will surround them. When governing the body, do not over-exert the spirit. In governing the nation, do not agitate the people. Thereby, these things may continue for a long time.

FOURTY-FOUR
In Chapter 44, Lao Zi demonstrates how the interchanges of passive and active, emptiness and fullness, yin and yang, relate to what is often at the root of desire – the strongest of all allures: status, wealth, and love (愛 , also meaning craving/fondness). Lao Zi explains that the ardent pursuit of these goals tends to neglect one’s most vital foundation – themselves. Thus, eradicating the pursuit of these ends is integral to the renunciant’s pursuit of self-purification.

While self-cultivation implies self-preservation, Daoism differentiates between the self/individual/body (身 , shen) and the "I/me" (我 , wo). Cultivation of the self involves suspending the "I" while cultivating the self. The difference between the I and self could be

understood as someone in a boat. Being on an ocean, we still need a boat (the sense of self), but the boat is not us, and so on getting to the shore we won't take it with us. We can realize that the boat is not us while still on the water, and even completely forget about it at times, but Daoism does not try to deny the existence of the boat. It accepts both boat and no-boat.

In the Daoist traditions that built their practices on Lao Zi's teachings, two interpretations of chapter 44 endure. On the one hand are those who have sworn off all worldly attachments, and on the other, those who have applied the last four lines to the chapter as a whole:

> Extensive hoarding assures substantial loss
> Know what is sufficient and you will not be disgraced
> Know when to stop and you will not be endangered
> Thereby you can endure

~ 45 ~

Great completion seems to be lacking
But when used, it is never depleted
Great fullness seems as though empty
But when used, it is never finished

Great straightness seems as though bent
Great skill seems as though clumsy
Great eloquence seems like mumbling

What is tense becomes cold
What is tranquil becomes warm
Clarity and tranquility
Can bring all under Heaven into alignment

Chapter 45
洪德 Flooding with Virtue

大成若缺，謂道德大成之君也。若缺者，滅名藏譽，如毀缺不備也。
“Great completion seems to be lacking”
This means that when Dao and Virtue are greatly developed in the ruler, he seems as though deficient in them. Rejecting titles and hiding from fame, he seems as though injured, deficient, and not ready (to rule).
其用不弊，其用心如是，則無敝盡時也。
“But when used, it is never depleted”
When the heart-mind is used properly, it does not become broken or exhausted.
大盈若沖，謂道德大盈滿之君也。若沖者，貴不敢驕也，富不敢奢也。
“Great fullness seems as though empty”
This means that when Dao and Virtue are great and full in a ruler, he seems as though empty. Though praised, he does not dare to be arrogant. Though wealthy, he does not dare to be extravagant.
其用不窮。其用心如是，則無窮盡時也。
“But when used, it is never finished”

When the heart-mind is used properly, it does not become depleted or finished up.

大直若屈，大直，謂修道法度正直如一也。若屈者，不與俗人爭，若可屈折。
“Great straightness seems as though bent”
“Great straightness” means cultivating and following the natural principles of Dao as they accord with Oneness. Those who “seem as though bent” do not follow along with man’s habitual combatitiveness and so appear flexible and bent.
大巧若拙，大巧謂多才術也。若拙者，亦不敢見其能。
“Great skill seems as though clumsy”
Great skill means abundantly talented and skilled. Those who “seem as though clumsy” simply do not show their abilities.
大辯若訥。大辯者，智無疑。若訥者，口無辟。
“Great eloquence seems like mumbling”
Those with great eloquence do not question their own wisdom. Those who seem to mumble use their mouths without restraint.
躁勝寒，勝，極也。春夏陽氣躁疾於上，萬物盛大，極則寒，寒則零落死亡也。言人不當剛躁也。
“What is tense becomes cold”
“Becomes,” here, means “reaches to.” In spring and summer, yang energy-breath is excitable and (related) illnesses increase while the myriad things multiply. At the extreme of yang, the cold seasons begin and coldness continues while things wither and die. (For these reasons) it is said that people should not be rigid and tense.[88]
靜勝熱，秋冬萬物靜於黃泉之下，極則熱，熱者生之源。
“What is tranquil becomes warm”
In autumn and winter, the myriad things are still, and yellow springs are in the earth. When cold arrives at its extreme, the warm seasons begin. This warmth activates the wellspring of life.
清靜能為天下正。能清靜則為天下之長，持身正則無終已時也。
“Clarity and tranquility can bring all under Heaven into alignment”
Clarity and tranquility can bring longevity to all under Heaven. By maintaining alignment in the body, it will not end before its time.

FOURTY-FIVE

Seeing the larger picture, title and glory are illusory and meaningless. Knowing this, an enlightened leader does not cling to them. Though held in high honour, he or she does not lose humility, knowing that all the power in the world is of no real value on returning to the true essence of reality – Wu Ji: Ultimate Nothingness. This being the case, Lao Zi teaches to let go, for tension brings cold, while tranquility brings life-warmth. Clarity and tranquility bring all under heaven into alignment, just as they bring harmony to the heart-mind, spirit, and body. These patterns of Dao are expressed universally in the oneness of being and non-being.

~ 46 ~

When all under Heaven is in accord with Dao
People go back to leading their horses on foot
While (plowing and) fertilizing (their fields)
When all under Heaven is out of accord with Dao
War horses are bred in the countryside

There is no greater (cause for) weakness
Than what is desirable
There is no greater (cause for) misfortune
Than not recognizing sufficiency
There is no greater (cause for) error
Than the desire to obtain
Therefore, know how to be content with sufficiency
And you will have enduring satisfaction

Chapter 46
儉欲 Economize Desires

天下有道，謂人主有道也。
“When all under Heaven is in accord with Dao”
This refers to when people and rulers are in accord with Dao.
卻走馬以糞，糞者，糞田也。兵甲不用，卻走馬治農田，治身者卻陽精以糞其身。
“People go back to leading their horses on foot, while (plowing and) fertilizing (their fields)”
“Fertilizing,” here, means fertilizing fields. Soldiers are not employed, and people go back to leading their horses on foot while managing and farming their fields. Those who govern the body lead yang essence to fertilize the body.
天下無道，謂人主無道也。
“When all under Heaven is out of accord with Dao”
This refers to when people and rulers are out of accord with Dao.
戎馬生於郊。戰伐不止，戎馬生於郊境之上，久不還也。
“War horses are bred in the countryside”

Military attacks do not stop, and war horses are bred in the upper regions and outer villages.

罪莫大於可欲。好淫色也。
“There is no greater (cause for) weakness than what is desirable”
Than being tempted by lewd appearances
禍莫大於不知足，富貴不能自禁止也。
“There is no greater (cause for) misfortune than not recognizing sufficiency”
Than possessing abundant wealth, and having no capacity for self-restraint
咎莫大於欲得。欲得人物，利且貪也。
“There is no greater (cause for) error than the desire to obtain”
Than the desire to obtain people and things for profit and greed
故知足之足，守真根也。
“Therefore, know how to be content with sufficiency”
Guard the root of reality within.
常足。無欲心也。
“And you will have enduring satisfaction”
You will have no desires in your heart.

FOURTY-SIX

Heshang Gong connects the metaphor of managing horses with internal cultivation, explaining that using horses to cultivate the fields is like cultivating the self, physically, energetically, and thus spiritually. His mention of leading yang essence (yang jing) to fertilize the body suggests yin and yang jing – the substantive (yin) and functional (yang) aspects of jing, with yin jing being the foundational side of jing and yang jing being the more expressed power of jing. This expressed power can be skillfully moderated and allowed to further nourish the foundational yin jing, though it is easily exhausted. [89]

The conservation of yang jing to nourish the foundational yin jing is akin to using horses to cultivate the fields, rather than gathering them to be mated and sent off to battle. This is to guard Dao within and use our powers to nourish the physical and spiritual self, rather than lose ourselves to anger and greed, squandering inner power and leaving us spiritually and physically depleted. Lao Zi explains that the base of misfortune, in taking the latter route, is not knowing when we have enough and letting this error in judgement bring about misguided desires. With cravings come all destabilizing emotions connected to that desire, leaving people feeling unsatisfied for not having things they never needed. It’s not the lack of that thing which causes this unhappiness, but the initial acceptance of the desire for it in the first place. This falling out of accord with the way things are, and

thereby falling out of accord with Dao, is to squander inner power on pursuits that only leave us more in need.

~ 47 ~

Without going out the door
Know all under Heaven
Without glancing out the window
See Heaven's Way
The further out one goes
The less they know

Therefore, the Sage does not move
Yet he knows
He describes and names (things)
Without seeing (them)
He brings about perfection
Without acting

Chapter 47
鑒遠 Mirror the Distant

不出戶知天下，聖人不出戶以知天下者，以己身知人身，以己家知人家，所以見天下也。
"Without going out the door, know all under Heaven"
The Sage does not go out the door to know the world. By his own body, he knows the bodies of others. By his own house he knows the houses of others. This is seeing all under Heaven.
不窺牖見天道，天道與人道同，天人相通，精氣相貫。人君清淨，天氣自正，人君多欲，天氣煩濁。吉兇利害，皆由於己。
"Without glancing out the window, see Heaven's Way"
Heaven's Dao and man's Dao are united, for Heaven and man are in communication with each other. Vital energy-breaths pass between them. When the ruler is pure and peaceful, Heaven's energy-breath is aligned. When the ruler has many desires, Heaven's energy-breath is troubled and turbulent. Prosperity, terror, assistance, and harm, can all be brought about by oneself.

其出彌遠，其知彌少。謂去其家觀人家，去其身觀人身，所觀益遠，所見益少也。
“The further out one goes, the less they know”
This means that if you distance yourself from your house to observe others’ houses, or distance yourself from your character to observe the character of others, then the benefit of observation will be distant, and the benefit of seeing will be small.
是以聖人不行而知，聖人不上天，不入淵，能知天下者，以心知之也。
“Therefore, the Sage does not move, yet he knows”
The Sage does not go up to Heaven, nor does he go into the ocean, but he can still understand the world. This is because he understands the heart and mind.
不見而名，上好道，下好德；上好武，下好力。聖人原小知大，察內知外。
“He describes and names (things) without seeing (them)”
When those above love Dao, those below love Virtue. When those above love military might, those below love power. The Sage begins with the small to know the large, examines the internal to know the external.
不為而成。上無所為，則下無事，家給人足，萬物自化就也。
“He brings about perfection without acting”
When those above are not impetuous, those below are not overworked. When people find satisfaction within their own houses, the myriad things are naturally drawn towards self-transformation.

FOURTY-SEVEN
Rather than seeking to change the behaviour of others, if we can settle the differences in ourselves we will find that many of our external problems no longer require resolution. Seeing the faults of others is quite simple, but self-awareness requires dedication and work. This inner work, however, is the master key to open every door that keeps us stuck in our ways, stuck in our path, and stuck in the revolving door of getting in our own way. As “the further out one goes, the less they know,” an intent focus on others’ failings only diverts this attention from our own. “Without glancing out the window, see Heaven’s Way.”

~ 48 ~

The pursuit of learning requires daily accumulation
The pursuit of Dao requires daily reduction
Reducing and reducing
Until arriving at effortlessness
Effortless, yet without inaction

Conquering all under Heaven
Is best done without the endeavour to do so
Perpetually, this endeavour will continue
Without satisfaction
Even when all under Heaven has been conquered

Chapter 48
忘知 Forget Knowledge

為學日益，學謂政教禮樂之學也。日益者，情欲文飾日以益多。
“The pursuit of learning requires daily accumulation”
“Learning,” here, means learning the proprieties of rites and music. For those who gain every day, strong emotions, desires, and sophistications, increase over time.
為道日損。道謂之自然之道也。日損者，情欲文飾日以消損。
“The pursuit of Dao requires daily reduction”
Dao means the Dao of natural spontaneity. For those who reduce each day, desires, strong emotions, and sophistications, eventually vanish.
損之又損，損情欲也。又損之，所以漸去。
“Reducing and reducing”
Reduce desires and strong emotions until they gradually disappear.
以至於無為，當恬淡如嬰兒，無所造為也。
“Until arriving at effortlessness”
Be quiet and unnoticeable like an infant, not taking on initiatives.
無為而無不為。情欲斷絕，德於道合，則無所不施，無所不為也。
“Effortless, yet without inaction”
When desires are completely removed, Virtue and Dao join together. Then there is nothing which is not taken care of, nothing which is not managed.

取天下常以無事，取，治也。治天下當以無事，不當以勞煩也。
“Conquering all under Heaven is best done without the endeavour to do so”
“Conquering,” here, means governing. When governing all under Heaven, one should be without the endeavour to do so. It should not be done with over-exertion and agitation.
及其有事，不足以取天下。及其好有事，則政教煩，民不安，故不足以治天下也。
“Perpetually, this endeavour will continue, without satisfaction, even when all under Heaven has been conquered”
By perpetuating the dream of this endeavour, the government teaches vexation and agitation, and the people are not at peace. As a result, even ruling the world will not bring satisfaction.

FOURTY-EIGHT

When studying a skill or subject, new understandings and habits are forged with applied effort as we try to fix ideas and perceptions in the mind. Following Dao, however, requires that we shed acquired habits and presumptions. In doing so we remove our fixed ways of seeing things and allow for open perception – for circumstances to arrive and leave without emotion or intellect automatically labelling experience. Shedding habits and allowing for open perception, these two ways of cleansing the heart work like left and right feet continually moving us closer to Dao as we get less and less burdened by fixed perceptions and habitual emotions and desires.

Heshang Gong shows that this process of purification must take into account that hoarding knowledge often brings with it a sense of sophistication and superiority. Just as the pursuit of Dao requires that we reduce our attachment to “having all the answers,” it also requires that we do away with this sense of superiority.

Giving up this attachment to having all the answers, we can also learn to have faith in Dao. As Lao Zi imparts in chapter 23, having faith that Dao will work things out only makes it easier for Dao to guide our lives in a propitious direction.

~ 49 ~

The Sage is without a fixed mind
Because he does not take his mind to be different
From that of the common people

To those who are excellent, I am excellent
To those who are not excellent, I am also excellent
This is the virtue of excellence

To those who are sincere, I am sincere
To those who are not sincere, I am also sincere
This is the virtue of sincerity

The Sage lives amongst the world with much timidity
Acting in the world as though clouded in his mind
The hundred families all focus their ears and eyes
And the Sage treats them all as his children

Chapter 49
任德 Trust in Virtue

聖人無常心，聖人重改更，貴因循，若自無心。
“The Sage is without a fixed mind”
The Sage puts more importance on being able to change and improve. He places value on adjusting to a situation. This resembles having no mind of his own.
以百姓心為心。百姓心之所便，聖人因而從之。
“Because he does not take his mind to be different from that of the common people”
When the hundred families’ minds are at ease – so too, then, is the Sage’s.
善者吾善之，百姓為善，聖人因而善之。
“To those who are excellent, I am excellent”
When the hundred families act with excellence – so too, then, does the Sage .
不善者吾亦善之，百姓雖有不善者，聖人化之使善也。

“To those who are not excellent, I am also excellent”
When the hundred families do not act with excellence, the Sage reforms them by being excellent, himself.
德善。百姓德化，聖人為善。
“This is the virtue of excellence”
By acting with excellence, the Sage transforms the virtue of the hundred families.
信者吾信之，百姓為信，聖人因而信之。
“To those who are sincere, I am sincere”
When the hundred families are sincere, the Sage is also sincere.
不信者吾亦信之，百姓為不信，聖人化之為信者也。
“To those who are not sincere, I am also sincere”
When the hundred families are not sincere, the Sage reforms them by acting sincerely.
德信。百姓德化，聖人以為信。
“This is the virtue of sincerity”
By acting sincerely, the Sage transforms the virtue of the hundred families.
聖人在天下怵怵，聖人在天下怵怵常恐怖，富貴不敢驕奢。
“The Sage lives amongst the world with much timidity”
The Sage lives in the world with much timidity, always apprehensive and cautious, like a wealthy person hoping to maintain their wealth, and thus not daring to act arrogantly and ostentatiously.
為天下渾其心。言聖人為天下百姓混濁其心，若愚闇不通也。
“Acting in the world as though clouded in his mind”
The Sage goes about the world and the hundred families as though he were clouded in his mind, seeming as though stupid, deaf, and dumb.
百姓皆注其耳目，注，用也。百姓皆用其耳目為聖人視聽也。
“The hundred families all focus their ears and eyes”
“Focus,” here, means “use.” The hundred families all use their ears and eyes to observe and listen to the Sage.
聖人皆孩之。聖人愛念百姓如嬰孩赤子，長養之而不責望其報。
“And the Sage treats them all as his children”
The Sage loves and thinks of the hundred families as though they were children and infants, supporting them for a long time, yet not hoping to receive anything from them in the future.[90]

FOURTY-NINE

What is translated in the first line here as “fixed” (常 , chang), and read as such by Heshang Gong, can also mean common and “ordinary,” which would say that the Sage’s mentality is not ordinary, but extraordinary. Ordinarily, people do not look inward to find the source of their emotions and reactions, but look externally at what triggered these emotions; they do not do their best for people who do not offer their own best; they are not sincere with those who are untrustworthy. The Sage, on the other hand, shows the same virtue to the scoundrel that he or she does to the saint, for they will not compromise their virtue in accordance with the virtue of others. This is not a form of martyrdom, but of self-cultivation.

Following this path, one will simply have to take the high road a disproportionate amount of the time. Such is the path of external-cultivation; that is, the method of purifying one’s actions in the process of refining oneself.

~ 50 ~

To depart from life is to enter death
The companions of life are thirteen
The companions of death are thirteen
In their way of living, people approach death-traps
By way of (these) thirteen
Why is this so?
Because they seek a life of excess

I have heard that those who are good at absorbing life
Travel the land without encountering rhinoceros or tigers
That they walk into groups of soldiers
Without requiring armour, or soldiers, for protection
The rhinoceros has no place to thrust its horn
The tiger has no place to grab with its claw
And the soldier has nowhere to place his weapon
Why is this so?
Because these people are without any death-traps

Chapter 50
貴生 Treasuring Life

出生入死。出生，謂情欲出五內，魂靜魄定，故生。入死，謂情欲入於胸臆，精勞神惑，故死。
“To depart from life is to enter death”
When emotions and desires leave the five internal organs, the hun (yang spirits housed in the liver) become calm, and the po (yin spirits housed in the lungs) become settled. Vitality then flourishes.

When emotions and desires go deep into the consciousness of the heart, vital essence is over-exerted, and the spirit becomes confused. This causes death.
生之徒十有三，死之徒死十有三，言生死之類各有十三，謂九竅四關也。其生也目不妄視，耳不妄聽，鼻不妄嗅，口不妄言，味，手不妄持，足不妄行，精神不妄施。其死也反是也。
“The companions of life are thirteen, The companions of death are thirteen”

Lao Zi is saying that (the path to) life and death are both governed by thirteen things: the nine bodily apertures and four closures.[91] To nourish life, the eyes should not observe frantically, the ears should not listen frantically, the nose should not smell frantically, the mouth should not speak or taste frantically, the hands should not grasp frantically, the feet should not walk frantically, and the spiritual vitality should not be frantically engrossed. For death, it is the opposite of this.
人之生，動之死地十有三。人知求生，動作反之十三死也。
“In their way of living, people approach death-traps by way of (these) thirteen”
People know to seek life; however, going against this, they bring about death by these thirteen things.
夫何故，問何故動之死地也。
“Why is this so?”
Asking why death arrives this way.
以其求生之厚。所以動之死地者，以其求生活之事太厚，違道忤天，妄行失紀。
“Because they seek a life of excess”
Those who die by seeking life try to make a living in order to support an excessive lifestyle. Defying Dao and disobeying Heaven, their frantic behaviour causes them to lose the true path.
蓋以聞善攝生者，攝，養也。
“I have heard that those who are good at absorbing life”
“Absorbing,” here, means supporting.
路行不遇兕虎，自然遠離，害不干也。
“Travel the land without encountering rhinoceros’ or tigers”
Natural spontaneity keeps them far away from harm, and also from going on the attack.
入軍不披甲兵，不好戰以殺人。
“That they walk into groups of soldiers without requiring armour, or soldiers, for protection”
They do not approve of battle or killing.
兕無投其角，虎無所措爪，兵無所容其刃。養生之人，兕虎無由傷，兵刃無從加之也。
“The rhinoceros has no place to thrust its horn, the tiger has no place to grab with its claw, and the soldier has nowhere to place his weapon”

The rhinoceros and tiger have no reason to injure those who nurture life (yang sheng). The soldier has nothing to gain by doing so either.
夫何故，問兕虎兵甲何故不加害之。
“Why is this so?”
Why do the rhinoceros, tiger, and armed soldier have nothing to gain from hurting them?
以其無死地。以其不犯十三之死地也。言神明營護之，此物不敢害。
“Because these people are without any death-traps.”
They do not violate the thirteen places of death. Lao Zi is saying that when spiritual lights fortify and protect (those who nurture life), these things will not dare to cause injury.

FIFTY

When Classical Chinese Medicine explains mental disorders, it often refers to the hun-spirits (housed in the liver, yang and ethereal) and po-spirits (housed in the lungs, yin and earthly/bodily), as well as a pathological disconnection between the heart (which houses the shen-spirit) and kidneys (which house the yuan qi/source-energy and serve to ground and nourish the spiritual essence/jing-shen).[92]

Because the heart, housing the shen-spirit, acts as the emperor of the body, when the heart and spirit are in disorder, the health of the body no longer enjoys an easy balance and security. As this disorder worsens, prolonged frantic emotions stress the organs and cause a failure of communication between organ systems. Thus, the spirit is the “pivot” or “hinge” of an individual’s health – perhaps why the second text of the *The Yellow Emperor’s Classic of Internal Medicine (Huang Di Nei Jing)* is called *Classic of the Spritual Pivot (Ling Shu Jing)*.[93]

After touching briefly on the above medical points, Heshang Gong describes the path of cultivation in everyday life, where one guards the yuan-qi by not over-extending the senses and body in frantic response. From this, we may also understand why “*those who are good at absorbing life travel the land without encountering rhinoceros’ or tigers.. they walk into groups of soldiers without requiring armour, or soldiers, for protection*.” If one encounters a wild animal and is shocked or panicked (frantic), the animal is more likely to attack them, just as soldiers are more likely to take notice of civilians who are startled by their presence. This practice, again, teaches us to look within for the path to balance and harmony, and not to be ensnared by diversions.

~ 51 ~

Dao actuates them
Virtue takes care of them
Power completes them
This is why the myriad things
Cannot help but to respect Dao and cherish Virtue

Respecting Dao and cherishing Virtue
This is not commanded
Yet it has always been in their nature

Dao actuates them
Virtue takes care of them, extends their lifespans
Teaches them, completes them
Tests them, raises them
And brings them back (to their pure natures)

Actuates them but does not possess them
Sets them in motion but does not expect of them
Extends their lives without ruling and controlling
This is called Fathomless Virtue

Chapter 51
養德 The Virtue of Nurturing

道生之，道生萬物。
“Dao actuates them”
Dao actuates the myriad things.
德畜之，德，一也。一主布氣而蓄養物形之，一為萬物設形像也。
“Virtue takes care of them”
“Virtue,” here, means “Oneness.” Oneness is the host of all things. It surrounds them with energy-breath, and gathers and rears things into form. Oneness establishes the form and image of all things.
勢成之。一為萬物作寒暑之勢以成之。
“Power completes them”
Oneness uses the power of hot and cold to complete all things.

是以萬物莫不尊道而貴德。道德所為，無不盡驚動，而尊敬之。
“This is why the myriad things cannot help but to respect Dao and cherish Virtue”
Without Dao and Virtue, there would be no impetus for action. This is why they are venerated and respected.
道之尊，德之貴，夫莫之命而常自然。道一不命召萬物，而常自然應之如影響。
“Respecting Dao and cherishing Virtue. This is not commanded, yet it has always been in their nature to do so”
Dao and Oneness do not issue official commands to the myriad things, yet, they are naturally compelled to cherish that which resembles (Dao and Oneness) in image or sound.
故道生之，德畜之，長之育之，成之孰之，養之覆之。道之於萬物，非但生而已，乃復長養、成孰、覆育，全其性命。人君治國治身，亦當如是也。
“Dao actuates them; Virtue takes care of them, extends their lifespans, teaches them, completes them, tests them, raises them, and brings them back (to their pure natures)”
Dao does not simply stop at giving to the myriad things life, but also gives them longevity, supports them, completes them and tests them, brings them back (to their pure natures), and teaches them. It maintains the wholeness of their pure nature (xing), and destiny-life-force (ming). Rulers who govern a nation, or govern their own bodies, should also follow this.
生而不有，道生萬物，不有所取以為利也。
“Actuates them but does not possess them”
Dao gives life to the myriad things but does not take ownership of them or use them for profit.
為而不恃，道所施為，不恃望其報也。
“Sets them in motion but does not expect of them”
Dao puts things into action but does not expect any reward.
長而不宰，道長養萬物，不宰割以為利也。
“Extends their lives without ruling and controlling”
Dao rears and extends the lifespan of all things. It does not dominate them or separate them from their profits.
是謂玄德。道之所行恩德，玄闇不可得見。
“This is called Fathomless Virtue”

The Dao's mercy is carried out through Virtue. Fathomless and obscure, it cannot be seen.

FIFTY-ONE

Like the followers of Abrahamic religions, the people of ancient China also worshipped a sole creator god, namely Shang Di (Highest Ruler), and the perhaps less anthropomorphised Tai Yi (Supreme One). Offering the relatively new cosmology of Dao and De, Lao Zi may suggest in chapter 51 that he regarded the worship of Shang Di and Tai Yi as an expression of the human impulse "to respect Dao and cherish De." As he explains in chapter four, "(Dao) appears to have preceded the primordial ruler."

Some parallels might be drawn from chapter 51 to traditional gender roles between mother and father, and De and Dao, with the father initiating conception (fertilization) and the mother bringing up the household. In the absence of any subjects before these verbs (teaching, completing, testing), Heshang Gong reads the nurturing roles as also attributed to Dao. This is likely because Dao and De are beyond this dichotomy of mother and father. All things came from Dao, including Oneness before it was separated into yin and yang (see DDJ42). They were not gestated in De. Further, it is the De of Heaven (yang) that mixes with the qi of Earth (yin) to gives rise to life, according to the Daoist cosmology in the *Huang Di Nei Jing*.[94] De may best be understood, then, not as Dao's counterpart, but as the effectiveness, expression, or essence of Dao.

Heshang Gong also clarifies in chapter 51 that Lao Zi speaks of Oneness and Virtue synonymously. To understand the connection or unity of De and Oneness, we can compare the nurturing quality of De in chapter 51 with the perfecting quality of Oneness in chapter 22:

> That which is flexible is preserved
> That which is bent is straightened
> That which is empty is filled
> That which is broken is repaired
> That which is lacking acquires
> That which is excessive becomes confused
> Therefore, the Sage embraces Oneness
> So as to bring the world into alignment

De is often said to be the power of Dao or the character of Dao, and could otherwise be understood as the *effect* of Dao. To understand this power and character as the aligning and harmonizing power of Oneness is also consistent with chapter 39:

> In the beginning was the attainment of Oneness
> Heaven attained Oneness
> And became clear
> Earth attained Oneness
> And became serene

…
The myriad things attained Oneness
And were born

~ 52 ~

The world has an origin
Known as the Mother of All Under Heaven

Having known the Mother, know the Son
Having known the Son, guard the Mother within
With no self, there is no danger

Seal the doors
Close the gate
By opening the doors
And increasing pursuits
There will be no help for you in later years

Seeing what is small is called “seeing clearly”
Maintaining suppleness is called “strengthening”
Use this light
Turn this clear vision back to its source
And you will not lose the body to illness
This is called “studying the Eternal”

Chapter 52
歸元 Return to the Origin

天下有始，始有道也。
“The world has an origin”
This origin is Dao.
以為天下母。道為天下萬物之母。
“Which acts as the Mother of all under Heaven”
Dao acts in the world as the mother of all things.

既知其母,復知其子，子，一也。既知道己，當復知一也。
“Having known the Mother, know the Son”
“The Son,” here, is Oneness. Having known the Dao for yourself, return to knowing Oneness.
既知其子，復守其母，己知一，當復守道反無為也。

“Having known the Son, guard the Mother within”
Having known Oneness for yourself, you should return to keeping Dao within and reverting to non-action.
沒身不殆。不危殆也。
“With no self, there is no danger”
It will not be in grave danger.[95]

塞其兌，兌，目也。目不妄視也。
“Seal the doors”
“The doors” refer to the eyes. The eyes should not make frivolous observations.
閉其門，門，口也。使口不妄言終身不勤。人當塞目不妄視，閉口不妄言，則終生不勤苦。
“Close the gate”
“The gate” refers to the mouth. If the mouth does not speak frantically, then the body will not be over-exerted. When people seal their eyes, not making frantic observations, and close their mouths, not making frantic speech, this results in a life without strain or hardship.
開其兌，開目視情欲也。
“By opening the doors”
By opening the eyes to observe what one craves.
濟其事，濟，益也。益情欲之事。
“And increasing pursuits”
“Increasing,” here, means “advancing” – advancing in the pursuits of your cravings.
終身不救。禍亂成也。
“There will be no help for you in later years”
This is to pursue misfortune and chaos.
見小曰明，萌芽未動，禍亂未見為小，昭然獨見為明。
“Seeing what is small is called ‘seeing clearly’”
A sprouting shoot which has not yet moved is like misfortune and chaos not seen while they were small. Only by seeing with enlightened clarity does the present become illuminated.
守柔曰強。守柔弱，日以強大也。
“Maintaining suppleness is called strengthening”
Maintaining suppleness and flexibility makes one stronger day by day.

用其光，用其目光於外，視時世之利害。
“Use this light”
Using the eyes externalizes the light. Chasing the world with your eyes can cause you harm.
復歸其明。復當返其光明於內，無使精神泄也。
“Turn this clear vision back to its source”
Return it by sending this light and clear vision back inside of you so that your spiritual vitality will not leak out.
無遺身殃，內視存神，不為漏失。
“And you will not lose the body to illness”
Direct your gaze to the spirit within so that it is not neglected or lost.

是謂習常。人能行此，是謂修習常道。
“This is called ‘studying the Eternal’”
All people can practice this. This is called “studying and practicing the Eternal Dao.”

FIFTY-TWO
Having found the source of life within ourselves, we can look upon the outer world with a new appreciation and perspective. Looking upon life with this new appreciation and perspective, we can again look within ourselves to find that source of life, cherishing it and not letting it scatter through our obsessions with externals. Rather than giving that intense focus to things outside of ourselves, we can turn that focus inwards to our internal reservoirs, reconnecting with the source of life, and guarding our senses from obsession with externals. Over time, this will give rise to spiritual intelligence/spiritual brilliance (shen ming).

The technique of meditation described in chapter 52 later became known as “turning the light around (回光),” and was greatly expanded upon in Lu Dongbin’s *Secret of the Golden Flower*.[96]

See, also, my comments in chapter one for its correlations with chapter 52.

~ 53 ~

If I were steadfast in understanding
I would simply walk the Great Path
Having only one rightful fear
The Great Way is like cleared land
Yet the people love narrow tracks

The court is kept immaculate
Yet the fields are overgrown with weeds
The granaries are so empty
Yet their clothes so full of colour
In their belts are sharp swords
While they waste food and drink
Hoarding treasures to rival a mint

This is called thieving and boasting
It is surely not the Way!

Chapter 53
益證 Evidence of Profiteering

使我介然有知，行於大道。介，大也。老子疾時王不行大道，故設此言。使我介然有知於政事，我則行於大道，躬行無為之化。
“If I were steadfast in understanding, I would simply walk the Great Path”
“Steadfast,” here, means “great.” Lao Zi was sickened by the kings of his day who did not walk the Great Path. Thus, he wrote: “If I were steadfast in understanding political affairs, I would simply walk the Great Path. I would practice it in myself, and reform without effort.”
唯施是畏。唯，獨也。獨畏有所施為，恐失道意。欲賞善，恐偽善生；欲信忠恐詐忠起。
“Having only one rightful fear”
“Only,” here, means “single.” The only fear that could be had is the fear of forgetting the Dao. If you desire to be rewarded for excellence, beware the emergence of false excellence. If you desire sincerity and selflessness, beware the emergence of false selflessness.

大道甚夷，而民好徑。夷，平易也。徑，邪、不平正也。大道甚平易，而民好從邪徑也。
“The Great Way is like cleared land, yet the people love narrow tracks”
“Cleared land,” here, means flat and easy. “Narrow paths” refer to wickedness, which is not flat and straightforward. The Great Dao is flat and easy, yet people prefer to follow the wicked and narrow paths.

朝甚除，高台榭，宮室修。
“The court is kept immaculate”
Old towering pavilions and palatial study halls.
田甚蕪，農事廢，不耕治。
“Yet the fields are overgrown with weeds”
Agricultural professions are discarded and ploughing times are poorly managed.
倉甚虛，五穀傷害，國無儲也。
“The granaries are so empty”
The five grains becomes diseased and the nation has no reserves.
服文綵，好飾偽，貴外華。
“Yet their clothes so full of colour”
Their illustrious appearances are deceptive. Their honour is but an external decoration.
帶利劍，尚剛強，武且奢。
“In their belts are sharp swords”
Their rigid and unyielding strength is wasteful and exaggerated.
厭飲食，財貨有餘，多嗜欲，無足時。
“While they waste food and drink, and hoard treasures (to rival a mint)”
Having many desirous weaknesses, one is never satisfied.

是謂盜誇。百姓而君有餘者，是由劫盜以為服飾，持行誇人，不知身死家破，親戚並隨也。
“This is called thieving and boasting”
When the hundred families and elites have excessive possessions, thieves and robbers wear fancy clothes, and boastfulness is encouraged. Not realizing that their bodies will die and their houses will rot – so do their parents and relatives.
非道哉。人君所行如是，此非道也。復言也哉者，痛傷之辭。
“It is surely not the Way!”

Rulers who act like this are on the wrong path. As though repeating the sentence, he follows this with an exclamation. It is an impassioned lament.

FIFTY-THREE

The path of righteousness and goodness is not hard to find, though it is easily confused by rationales such as “the law said I could; the government ordered it; it was common practice.” Looking to law, government, religion, or culture for one’s moral compass is unnecessary. We know what we do not want imposed upon ourselves, and so we know that we should not impose the same on others. Further, by not wishing anyone to sacrifice their well-being for our own, we will not be in danger of following this golden rule to a fault.

Daoists and Buddhists both share the same five precepts that help remind a person of the basics for doing right by others: No killing, no stealing, no lying, no sexual impropriety, and no intoxication. Exploring these five precepts reveals a greater magnitude than may appear on the surface. For example, no killing also relates to not wasting, as waste requires unnecessary consumption; no stealing also relates to consideration of others, as to disrespect someone is to steal their dignity; no lying also relates to being genuine and pure – to not falsifying your persona; no sexual impropriety also relates to excessive desires, as excessive desires can become like an intoxicant and cause us to act against our own good judgement; no intoxication is not simply a matter of prudishness, but of appreciating, using, and cultivating our own power, our own consciousness. The directions to this Great Path are always the same: the path is within you, and that is where you walk it; however, we can know that we have strayed from it when cultivating ourselves leads to the depletion of others.

~ 54 ~

If well established it is not uprooted
If well embraced it is not torn away
Children and grandchildren
Will then make sacrificial offerings without end

Cultivate this in the body
And its Virtue will be true
Cultivate this in the home
And its Virtue will be overabundant
Cultivate this in the village
And its Virtue will be long lasting
Cultivate this in the nation
And its Virtue will be plentiful
Cultivate this in the world
And its Virtue will be widespread

Thus, it is by the body that the body is observed
It is by the home that the home is observed
It is by the village that the village is observed
It is by the nation that the nation is observed
And it is by the world that the world is observed

How do I know the world to be this way?
By this

Chapter 54
修觀 Cultivating Observation

善建者不拔，建，立也。善以道立身立國者，不可得引而拔之。
“If well established, it is not uprooted”
“Established” means fixed in place. When Dao is firmly fixed in place within the body, or within the nation, it cannot be pulled out and uprooted.
善抱者不脫，善以道抱精神者，終不可拔引解脫
“If well embraced, it is not torn away”
This excellence is obtained by those who embrace the spiritual vitality with Dao. They can never be uprooted. They cannot be pulled out by loosening

this embrace and removing them.
子孫祭祀不輟。為人子孫能修道如是，長生不死，世世以久，祭祀先祖，宗廟無絕時。
“Children and grandchildren will then make sacrificial offerings without end”
When people have children and grandchildren who can cultivate Dao like this, they have long life and do not die. From generation to generation, they continue to worship and sacrifice to the original ancestor, and the ancestral shrines are well kept.

修之於身，其德乃真，修道於身愛氣養神，益壽延年。其德如是，乃為真人。
“Cultivate this in the body and its Virtue will be true”
Cultivate Dao in the body by cherishing the energy-breath and nurturing the spirit. This will benefit you by prolonging the aging process. With such Virtue you will become a Genuine Person (zhen ren).[97]
修之於家，其德乃餘，修道於家，父慈子孝，兄友弟順，夫信妻貞。其德如是，乃有餘慶及於來世子孫。
“Cultivate this in the home and its Virtue will be overabundant”
Cultivate Dao in the home and fathers will be kind, children will be filial, older brothers will be friendly, younger sibling will be obedient, and wives will be trustworthy and virtuous. With such Virtue, you will have an overabundance of celebrations, and many generations of children and grandchildren.
修之於鄉，其德乃長，修道於鄉，尊敬長老，愛養幼少，教誨愚鄙。其德如是，乃無不覆及也。
“Cultivate this in the village and its Virtue will be long lasting”
Cultivate Dao in the village and elders will be respected and honoured, infants and children will be loved and supported, and the uneducated will be taught and encouraged. With such Virtue, there will be no one who is not protected and supported.
修之於國，其德乃豐，修道於國，則君信臣忠，仁義自生，禮樂自興，政平無私。其德如是，乃為豐厚也。
“Cultivate this in the nation and its Virtue will be plentiful”
When Dao is cultivated in the nation, rulers are trustworthy, and ministers are loyal. Benevolence and righteousness naturally arise, and courtesy and

joy naturally follow. Political affairs are also peaceful and not affected by self-interest. When virtue is like this, it brings substantial abundance.
修之於天下，其德乃普。人主修道於天下，不言而化，不教而治，下之應上，信如影響。其德如是，乃為普博。
“Cultivate this in the world and its Virtue will be widespread”
Leaders who cultivate Dao in the world do not speak, yet there is reform. They do not teach, yet there is order. Humble duties are respected, and their sincerity leaves a lasting impression. When virtue is like this, it expands into all areas.

故以身觀身，以修道之身，觀不修道之身，孰亡孰存也。
“Thus, it is by the body that the body is observed”
To cultivate Dao in the body, observe what happens when one does not cultivate Dao in the body. To learn what causes the loss of life, learn what preserves life.
以家觀家，以修道之家，觀不修道之家。
“It is by the home that the home is observed”
To cultivate Dao in the home, observe what happens when Dao is not cultivated in the home.
以鄉觀鄉，以修道之鄉，觀不修道之鄉也。
“It is by the village that the village is observed”
To cultivate Dao in the village, observe what happens when Dao is not cultivated in the village.
以國觀國，以修道之國，觀不修道之國也。
“It is by the nation that the nation is observed”
To cultivate Dao in the nation, observe what happens when Dao is not cultivated in the nation.
以天下觀天下。以修道之主，觀不修道之主也。
“And it is by the world that the world is observed”
To cultivate Dao in the ruler, observe what happens when Dao is not cultivated in the ruler.

吾何以知天下之然哉，以此。老子言，吾何知天下修道者昌，背道者亡。以此五事觀而知之也。
“How do I know the world to be this way? By this.”
Lao Zi says “How do I know that those who cultivate Dao, prosper, and those who oppose Dao, die? It is by these five observations that I know

this.”

FIFTY-FOUR

Just as molecules make up cells, cells make up tissues, tissues make up organs, organs make up organ systems, and organ systems make up a body, human life exists in numerous levels of interdependence with our natural and social environments. Chapter 54 reflects ancient Chinese medicine’s primary focus on nourishing health so as to avoid any need for corrective therapies. Along with Daoists’ strategies for understanding and facilitating natural harmony, so as to avoid any need for forced behaviours, was the aim of establishing this natural harmony, Dao, in themselves, in their households, villages, nations, and in the world.

Establishing natural harmony in oneself, a spontaneous desire arises to help one’s family. This is not a desire born of socialization or fear, but an impulse to protect others as we would protect ourselves. Having established harmony within, we are able to expand this healing intention to the next level of our network – family, which may include teachers and close friends. When harmony is established in the family network, this family can expand its harmony to the community. When harmony is established in a community, it can have profound influences on cities and even nations, locally and internationally.

A technique to begin cultivating this harmony is to first find it within during meditation by feeling the life force and harmony within after some time and experience with qi cultivation (qi gong). Feeling this life force and harmony as love, love yourself and establish this Virtue. Once you have established this Virtue in yourself, think of a parent, older sibling, or teacher and expand it out to them (traditionally, teachers are thought of at this second phase of the meditation). When you have established it with them, think of a friend and expand it out to them. When you have established it with them, think of a “neutral” person, for example the clerk at your local convenience store, and expand it out to them. When you have well established it with a neutral person, think of an antagonist or enemy in your life and expand it out to them. Once you have established it with them, think of all beings (material, spiritual, plant, animal, etc.) and expand it out to them.

I have adapted this meditation from the common Buddhist “maitri (loving-kindness) meditation” to Daoist principles as they have resonated for me during qi gong practice. It is commonly recommended for maitri meditation that one generally thinks of people opposite to the gender to which they are attracted, so as to avoid potentially confused feelings of romantic attachment. On the other hand, this meditation can be helpful to overcome turbulence between romantic partners by thinking of one’s partner during the third phase – extending out to friends. In this instance, however, one should close the meditation at the end of this phase, rather than extend this feeling out to neutrals, enemies/antagonists, and all beings. They should also be careful not to let the feeling of love become submerged in feelings of attachment, as attachment often turns one to think of their own needs, rather than the wellbeing of others.

A good posture to take during this meditation is that of embracing a tree trunk in front of you, with the tips of your left and right fingers about 10 inches apart, at chest level, feeling the energy described above within this embrace as you go through this meditation. The posture should be straight and the shoulders released of tension for this position.[98] An intention or focus for this meditation can be drawn from the last section of chapter 13 in the Dao De Jing:

> Those who make the world to be their own self
> And care for it as such
> To them the world can be entrusted

Another way to translate this is "When he loves himself as he loves the world, the world can be entrusted to him." Feeling this life force and harmony as love, love yourself as the world and the world as yourself, for the world is in you just as you are in the world.[99]

~ 55 ~

He who embraces abundant Virtue
Is like an infant

Poisonous snakes do not sting him
Ferocious beasts will not steal him
Birds of prey will not take him away

His bones are flexible and tendons pliant
Yet his grasp is firm
He does not yet know
About the joining of male and female
Yet becomes aroused
He is full of vitality
He can scream all day long
And his voice does not become hoarse
He is full of calmness

To know calm is called “endurance”
To know endurance is called “illumination”
Nourishing life is called “predicting the future”
When the mind is attuned to the breath
This is called “powerful”

When things have grown and become old
We call this “not Dao”
What is “not Dao,” finishes early

Chapter 55
玄符 Mysterious Signs

含德之厚，謂含懷道德之厚也。
“He who embraces abundant Virtue”
This means that when you embrace Dao in your heart, Virtue is abundant (in you).
比於赤子。神明保佑含德之人，若父母之於赤子也。
“Is like an infant”

Spiritual lights protect Virtuous people as a father and mother protect their infant.

毒蟲不螫，蜂蠆蛇虺不螫。
“Poisonous snakes do not sting him”
Wasps and poisonous snakes do not bite him.
猛獸不據，玃鳥不搏。赤子不害於物，物亦不害之。故太平之世，人無貴賤，仁心，有刺之物，還返其本，有毒之蟲，不傷於人。
“Ferocious beasts will not steal him. Birds of prey will not take him away”
Infants do not harm creatures, so creatures do not harm them. In eras of supreme peace, people do not distinguish between rich and poor, but hold benevolence in their hearts; stinging creatures go underground, and poisonous creatures do no harm.

骨弱筋柔而握固。赤子筋骨柔弱而持物堅固，以其意心不移也。
“His bones are flexible and tendons pliant, yet his grasp is firm”
The infant’s tendons and bones are pliant and weak, yet he can hold things firmly in his grasp. This is because his will and heart do not waver.
未知牝牡之合而峻作精之至也。赤子未知男女會合而陰陽作怒者，由精氣多之所致也。
“He does not yet know about the joining of male and female, yet becomes aroused. He is full of vitality.”
The infant does not know about male, female, or copulation, yet yin and yang arouse his passions. His vital energy-breaths are abundant.
終日號而不啞，和之至也。赤子從朝至暮啼號聲不變易者，和氣多之所至也。
“He can scream all day long and his voice does not become hoarse. He is full of calmness.”
An infant can easily scream, cry, and talk from morning until night, yet his harmonious energy-breath remains abundant.

知和日常，人能和氣柔弱有益於人者，則為知道之常也。
“To know calm is called ‘endurance’”
People can harmonize the energy-breath and obtain the benefits of softness and flexibility within the body. This will teach them the endurance of Dao.
知常日明，人能知道之常行，則日以明達於玄妙也。
“To know endurance is called ‘illumination’”

Knowing and practicing the endurance of Dao, day by day, one becomes clear-sighted, and sacred mysteries are revealed.
益生日祥，祥，長也。言益生欲自生，日以長大
“Nourishing life is called ‘predicting the future’”
“Predicting the future,” here, means longevity. This is to say that nourishing life brings the desire to live out one’s days, while also greatly extending them.
心使氣日強。心當專一和柔而神氣實內，故形柔。而反使妄有所為，和氣去於中，故形體日以剛強也。
“When the mind is attuned to the breath, this is called ‘powerful’”
When the mind unifies in harmony and softness, spirit-energy flourishes within. The body then becomes pliant. Reverting to reckless actions, the harmonized energy-breath abandons equilibrium, and the body gradually becomes unyielding.

物壯則老，萬物壯極則枯老也。
“When things have grown and become old”
When fully grown, things become dry and old.
謂之不道，枯老則不得道矣。
“We call this ‘not Dao’”
Drying out and aging is not the way to attain Dao!
不道早已。不得道者早死。
“What is ‘not Dao,’ finishes early”
Not obtaining Dao, they die early.

FIFTY-FIVE
In relaxation and fully embraced De, the essences of the body circulate and make one more physically and spiritually robust, relaxing the mind and nourishing the body. Western science might describe this as the circulation of hormones, such as serotonin, participating in the complex processes of homeostasis. Daoists, however, find their traditional understandings and terminologies far more effective for learning how to bring these effects about, with practices that have proven effective for more than 2000 years.

From this robust yet relaxed state, the mind can access information, and the body can stay in motion, for far longer than when they are stressed. Observing an infant when they are relaxed, we can see pure awareness, free of preconception, free of worry. This state of mind is not so uncommon for adults, but the over-processed awareness of a mind obsessed with desire, good and bad, right and wrong, tends to interrupt it. The infant is still keenly aware of his internal energy and feels it grow in his fist as he grips something, almost as though absorbing it into his own energy. His will and mind are undivided by doubt.

The way to cultivate this "genuine will" is described by Guigu Zi (Ghost Valley Master, c. 250 BC) in his "Seven Techniques of Yin Talisman":

> Develop the will when heart-mind-energy and thoughts do not reach (their goal). When you have a desire, the will appears as you think about it. Will is the envoy of desire. When there are many desires, the heart-mind is scattered. When the heart-mind is scattered, the will falters. When the will falters, thinking does not reach (the objective)…
>
> To begin cultivating the will, try to stabilize yourself in peacefulness. Stabilizing yourself in peacefulness, the will and intention will be genuine and firm. When the will and intention are genuine and firm, power and influence will not be separated. If spiritual intelligence is always firmly protected, you will be able to separate (others' power and influence over you).[100]

~ 56 ~

Those who know, do not speak
Those who speak, do not know

Close your ports
Shut your gates
Dull your points
Separate your tangles
Soften your glare
Be like ashes
This is to say
“Be one with the sacred”

(Such a state) cannot be attained by affection
It cannot be attained by neglect
It cannot be attained by profiting
It cannot be attained by harming
It cannot be attained by importance
And it cannot be attained by worthlessness
Thus, it is the most valuable thing under Heaven

Chapter 56
玄德 Sacred Virtue

知者不言，知者貴行不貴言也。
“Those who know do not speak”
Those who know, value practice rather than words.
言者不知。駟不及舌，多言多患。
“Those who speak do not know”
A team of four horses could not catch up to the tongue. Many words – many worries.

塞其兌，閉其門，塞閉之者，欲絕其源。
“Close your ports, shut your gates”
Block and shut them, for desires separate you from the root.
挫其銳，情欲有所銳為，當念道無為以挫止之。

“Dull your points”
When desires and strong emotions push for action, you should effortlessly dull and stop them by giving your thoughts over to Dao.
解其紛，紛，結恨不休也。當念道恬怕以解釋之
“Separate your tangles”
The tangles are knots of hatred which do not stop (becoming entangled). You should give your thoughts over to Dao while quietly and carefully untying and releasing them.
和其光，雖有獨見之明，當和之使闇昧，不使曜亂。
“Soften your glare”
If you are the only one who sees clearly, you should calmly allow yourself to be closed and obscured. Do not dazzle and confuse others.
同其塵，不當自別殊也。
“Be like ashes”
You should not distinguish yourself as separate and special.
是謂玄同。玄，天也。人能行此上事，是謂與天同道也。
“This is to say: Be one with the sacred”
Sacred, here, means Heaven. For all people, to practice this is the highest pursuit. This requires following the same way by which Heaven is one with Dao.

故不可得而親，不以榮譽為樂，獨立為哀。
“(Such a state) cannot be attained by affection”
Do not be delighted by honour and glory. The one who stands alone is sad.
亦不可得而踈；志靜無欲，故與人無怨。
“It cannot be attained by neglect”
With a tranquil will, free of desires, one associates with others without resentment.
不可得而利，身不欲富貴，口不欲五味。
“It cannot be attained by profiting”
Let the self not desire riches and honour. Let the mouth not desire the five flavours.
亦不可得而害，不與貪爭利，不與勇爭氣。
“It cannot be attained by harming”
Do not follow others in their greed and competition for profit; do not follow others in striving and competing for air.
不可得而貴，不為亂世主，不處暗君位。

“It cannot be attained by importance”
Do not take on the chaos of being master of the world. Do not sit in the darkness of the ruler’s throne.
亦不可得而賤，不以乘權故驕，不以失志故屈。
“And it cannot be attained by worthlessness”
Do not charge after power like a team of horses, nor lose your determination and become resigned.
故為天下貴。其德如此，天子不得臣，諸侯不得屈，與世沉浮容身避害，故天下貴也。
“Thus, it is the most valuable thing under Heaven”
When your virtue is like this, the Son of Heaven will not force you to be one of his ministers, and the marquis and lords will not seek to subdue you. Being in accord with the time, you can sink and float (with the waves), and avoid bringing harm to yourself. Thus, (being one with the sacred) is the most valuable thing in the world.

FIFTY-SIX

While “*those who know, do not speak; those who speak, do not know*” may reflect the teachings on humility in chapter 41,[101] or on being aware of our ignorance as in chapter 71,[102] the rest of chapter 56 places these words in a context closer to the practice of internal observation described in chapter 52. Thus, a closer parallel is found at the end of chapter 5: “To speak countless words is worthless. This is not as good as guarding balance within.”

Guarding balance within or “guarding the center” can also be understood as guarding Oneness – holding Virtue within. Doing so, natural harmony and balance are spontaneously restored. This practice begins with silence – closing the mouth, looking inward, and allowing Oneness to spontaneously balance your body, emotions, and mind – to separate your tangles (ch. 56) and untie the the knots (ch. 4) – until you become like dust blowing in the wind of Dao. As such, “there is nowhere for the tiger to place his claw” (ch. 49).

~ 57 ~

When aligned, the nation is well governed
When aberrant, the military is effective

It is by having no endeavour to do so
That the world is conquered
How do I know this to be the case?
By this

When taboos are abundant in the world
The people are extremely poor
When the people have an abundance of sharp weapons
The nation grows dark
When people have an abundance of skill and ingenuity
Irregular things flourish
When standards are increasingly publicized
Thieves and robbers abound

Thus the Sage says:
I do nothing, and the people reform themselves
I love stillness, and the people regulate themselves
I do not endeavour, and the people enrich themselves
I am without desires, and the people are natural

Chapter 57
淳風 In a Simple Manner

以正治國，以，至也。天使正身之人，使有國也
“When aligned, a nation is well governed”
“When,” here, means “by arriving at.” Heaven brings alignment to the body, and also to the nation.
以奇用兵，奇，詐也。天使詐偽之人，使用兵也
“When aberrant, the military is effective”[103]
Aberrant, here, means “deceptive.” Heaven causes the deceitful to be cheated, and for the military to be used against them.

以無事取天下。以無事無為之人，使取天下為之主。
“It is by having no endeavour to do so, that the world is conquered”
While being without such endeavours, the man of non-action causes the world to be conquered by a king’s actions.
吾何以知其然哉，以此。此，今也。老子言，我何以知天意然哉，以今日所見知。
“How do I know this to be the case? By this”
“By this,” means, “by present circumstances.” Lao Zi says “How do I know that things are like this? By observing present circumstances.”

天下多忌諱而民彌貧。天下謂人主也。忌諱者防禁也。今煩則姦生，禁多則下詐，相殆故貧。
“When taboos are abundant in the world, the people are extremely poor”
“The world,” here, refers to the king. Those who fear taboos defend their restrictions. Today’s troubles result from a debaucherous lifestyle. When restrictions are many, those below become dishonest. This puts them in danger, and thus, in poverty.
民多利器，國家滋昏。利器者，權也。民多權則視者眩於目，聽者惑於耳，上下不親，故國家昏亂。
“When the people have an abundance of sharp weapons, the nation grows dark”
Sharp weapons signify authoritative power. When the people have excessive power, what they see dazzles the eyes, what they hear baffles the ears, high and low status are not treated as one family, and the nation then falls into darkness and confusion.
人多伎巧，奇物滋起。人謂人君、百里諸侯也。多技巧，謂刻畫宮觀，雕琢章服，奇物滋起，下則化上，飾金鏤玉，文繡彩色日以滋甚。
“When people have an abundance of skill and ingenuity, irregular things flourish”
By “people,” here is meant the lords and marquis connected to rulers of 100 villages. When there is an abundance of skill and ingenuity in carving, painting, architecture, decoration, inlaying, cutting jade, and fashion, strange things begin to multiply. Those below can join the elite ranks by making decorative gold inlays and jade carvings. Decorative embroidery of varied hues and colours multiply day by day.

法物滋彰，盜賊多有。法物，好物也。珍好之物滋生彰著，則農事廢，飢寒並至，而盜賊多有也
“When standards are increasingly publicized, thieves and robbers abound”
“Standards,” here, refer to the love of material things. When the love of material things is held in high esteem, and becomes a part of everyday life, the farming professions are no longer valued, and people on all sides become hungry and cold. Thieves and robbers then multiply.

故聖人云：謂下事也。
“Thus the Sage says”
Speaking from a humble position
我無為而民自化，聖人言：我修道承天，無所改作，而民自化成也。
“I do nothing, and the people reform themselves”
The Sage says “I cultivate Dao and receive from Heaven. Without being made anew, the people transform and perfect themselves.
我好靜而民自正，聖人言：我好靜，不言不教，而民自忠正也。
“I love stillness, and the people regulate themselves”
The Sage says “I love stillness, and do not speak or teach, yet the people are, of themselves, loyal and honourable.”
我無事而民自富，我無徭役徵召之事，民安其業故皆自富也。
“I do not endeavour, and the people enrich themselves”
I do not enslave people or use the law to put them to work, yet the people are peaceful and professional, all enriching themselves.
我無欲而民自朴。我常無欲，去華文，微服飾，民則隨我為質樸也。聖人言：我修道守真，絕去六情，民自隨我而清也。
“I am without desires, and the people are natural”
I am always without desires, abandoning flowery decorations and wearing only simple clothing and ornaments. The people then follow me in being simple and natural.

The Sage says “I cultivate Dao and hold onto reality (by) cutting off and discarding the six emotions. The people then follow me of their own accord and become pure.

FIFTY-SEVEN
Though our minds are capable of incredible ingenuity, they can also overcome us like a poorly trained horse disregarding its rider. Relying too much on the power of our intellect can easily devolve into obsession, worry, and an incapacity for raw, true, experience. When

the mind-horse begins to overpower oneself, a common mistake is to further employ mental activity in trying to calm the mind – to give the mind what it wants: to know more, to understand more, to think more, to dominate. Like giving candy to a petulant child, this will never train the mind.

In Daoist and Classical Chinese medicine, the mind is made up of inner spirits, housed in the body as intention in the spleen, earthly yin spirits in the lungs, will and competence in the kidneys, ethereal yang spirits in the liver, and spiritual-brilliance in the heart. To see how the Sage's way of government can equally be applied to self-government, simply replace "the people" with "inner spirits" in Heshang Gong's commentary on the last few lines of this chapter:

> The Sage says "I love stillness, and do not speak or teach, yet the [inner spirits] are, of themselves, loyal and honourable… I do not enslave [the inner spirits] or use the law to put them to work, yet the [inner spirits] are peaceful and professional, all enriching themselves… I cultivate Dao and hold onto reality (by) cutting off and discarding the six emotions. The [inner spirits] then follow me of their own accord and become pure."

It is important to recognize the consistent abstention from force in the Sage's method of government: Finding inner stillness, the ruler naturally summons his inner Sage – his spiritual-brilliance (spiritual intelligence) – and is enlightened as to the right course, so long as he can accept the Sage's urging towards kindness, frugality, and modesty. Bringing order to the nation by clarity and stillness is analogous to the method of stilling the body until inner clarity and stillness arrive. This method is described in Guan Zi's *Art of the Heart-Mind* (c.350 BC),[104] the second volume of which commences by describing the technique of stilling the body in order to still the mind.

> When the bodily form is not aligned, Virtue does not approach;
> When the center is not pure and clear, the heart-mind is not stable.
> An aligned bodily form is adorned with Virtue;
> The myriad things (thereby) attain completion.
> When these wings (of Virtue and the heart-mind)[105] naturally come together,
> The spirit knows no limits.
> Illuminated, it's comprehension of the world
> Spans throughout the four directions.
> Therefore it is said: "When things do not confuse the senses,
> And the senses do not confuse the heart-mind –
> This is called 'inner Virtue'."
> Thereby, the energy of intention is settled;
> Having (settled), it returns to alignment.
> Energy-breath then fills the body,
> And one's conduct is righteous and upright.
> If this fullness (of energy-breath) is not pleasant, the heart-mind does not benefit.

If one’s conduct is not upright, the people will not be provided for.
Therefore, Sages resemble Heaven during such times: They are without thought of self when sitting above all.
They resemble Earth during such times: They are without thought of self when supporting all.
As for thought of self, it puts the world in chaos.[106]

~ 58 ~

When the government is dull and confused
The people are unadulterated
When the government is discriminating and analytical
The people are lacking

Misfortune! Good fortune relies on it
Good fortune! Misfortune is concealed within it
Who knows where the limits lie?
When there is no alignment
Proper alignment reverts to abberance
Excellence reverts to divergence
While the people are transfixed, days become years

Therefore, the Sage keeps things square
And doesn't make alterations
(He is) honourable, yet not injurious
Upright, yet not excessive
Shining, yet not dazzling

Chapter 58
順化 Following and Transforming

其政悶悶，其政教寬大，悶悶昧昧，似若不明也
"When the government is dull and confused"
When the government teaches people to be open-minded and generous, the people know that there is much they do not know and seem almost unintelligent.
其民醇醇，政教寬大，故民醇醇富厚，相親睦也
"The people are unadulterated"
When the government teaches people to be open-minded and generous, the people are pure, wealthy, and kind, treating everyone like family and friends.
其政察察，其政教急疾，言決於口，聽決於耳也
"When the government is discriminating and analytical"

When the government only quickly teaches people what they need to know in emergencies, people speak only from their mouths, and hear only with their ears.
其民缺缺。政教急疾。民不聊生。故缺缺日以踈薄。
“The people are lacking”
When the government only quickly teaches people what they need to know in emergencies, the people do not appreciate the small things in life. The people then act as though there are not enough days in the year, and neglect those in need.
禍兮福所倚，倚，因也。夫福因禍而生，人遭禍而能悔過責己，修道行善，則禍去福來。
“Misfortune! Good fortune relies on it”
“Relies on it,” here, means “is the reason for it.” So, good fortune relies on the misfortune from which it arose. When people come across misfortune yet are able to repent for ignoring their responsibilities, they cultivate Dao and walk the good road. Then misfortune leaves them and good fortune arrives.
福兮禍所伏。禍伏匿於福中，人得福而為驕恣，則福去禍來。
“Good fortune! Misfortune is concealed within it”
Misfortune creeps into good fortune when people obtain good fortune and then act haughty and unrestrained in their self-indulgence. Good fortune then leaves them and misfortune arrives.
孰知其極，禍福更相生，誰能知其窮極時。
“Who knows where the limits lie?”
In alterations of misfortune and fortune, who can know when destitution may reach its limit and swing in the other direction?
其無正，無，不也。謂人君不正其身，其無國也
“When there is no alignment”
“Is not,” here, means “does not.” So, when the ruler does not properly align his person, there will be no proper alignment (with Dao) in the nation.
正復為奇，奇，詐也。人君不正，下雖正，復化上為詐也。
“Proper alignment reverts to abberance”
Abberance, here, means dishonesty. When the ruler is not properly aligned, those below, even though upright, are changed by the dishonesty of those above them.
善復為訞。善人皆復化上為訞祥也。
“Excellence reverts to divergence”

People of excellence are all changed by the strange ways of those above them.
人之迷，其日固久。言人君迷惑失正以來，其日已固久。
“While the people are transfixed, days become years”
While the ruler is charmed and mislead, the loss of his proper alignment approaches. Then days disappear into years.

是以聖人方而不割，聖人行方正者，欲以率下，不以割截人也。
“Therefore, the Sage keeps things square and doesn’t make alterations”
The Sage acts upright and true, wishing to set a good example for those below. He does not divide and obstruct the people.
廉而不害，聖人廉清，欲以化民，不以傷害人也。今則不然，正己以害人也。
“(He is) honourable, yet not injurious”
The Sage’s honour is pure, hoping to thereby reform the people, and not harm or injure them. The tendency today is not like this, where people align themselves only to harm others.
直而不肆，肆，申也。聖人雖直，曲己從人，不自申也。
“Upright, yet not excessive”
Excessive, here, means extending upwards. Sages, though upright, will bend themselves to assist others. They do not continue extending upwards in spite of others needs.
光而不曜。聖人雖有獨見之明，當如闇昧，不以曜亂人也。
“Shining, yet not dazzling”
The Sage, though he may be the only one to see clearly, seems as though in the dark. He does not try to dazzle and confuse people.

FIFTY-EIGHT
If one tries hard enough, they can quite skilfully create rationales to excuse abuses and distort facts. This gives rise to profoundly disordered situations where basic definitions and accounts of events are twisted beyond any hope of determining reality. Inevitably, communication breakdown follows (perhaps intentionally), and this disorder remains so long as the distortions are not rectified and true accounts restored and accepted.

The Huainan Zi states:

> Sages use a single measurement, complying with what has been well established. They do not alter its acceptability; they do not change its regularity. Thus, they can determine what accords to the level, knowing what is crooked by what is just.[107]

This translates into internal cultivation by suggesting the “level and just” of inner stability, where attaining one’s desires (“good fortune”) may end in great dissatisfaction (“misfortune”), and an addiction to distractions (“while the people are transfixed”) can cart us through a life of second-hand experiences. Remaining upright yet considerate, without being taken in by a sense of superiority (“shining yet not dazzling”), one may hold fast to the level and not try to “change its regularity.”

~ 59 ~

In governing people
And serving Heaven
There is nothing like being thrifty

Only by being thrifty
Can one say they have prepared early
To be prepared early
Means resolving to accumulate Virtue
By resolving to accumulate Virtue
Nothing is insurmountable
When nothing is insurmountable
Limits are unknown
When limits are unknown
There can be a nation

Possessing the Mother of the nation
One's rule will have longevity
This is called deepening the roots
And strengthening the stalk
Long life endures by observing the Dao

Chapter 59
守道 Guarding Dao Within

治人，謂人君治理人民。
"In governing people"
This refers to (using) logic and reason when ruling and governing people of all classes.
事天，事，用也。當用天道，順四時。
"And serving Heaven"
Serving, here, means applying. To apply Heaven's Way is to obey the four seasons.
莫若嗇。嗇，愛惜也。治國者當愛民財，不為奢泰。治身者當愛精氣，不為放逸。
"There is nothing like being thrifty"

Thrifty, here, means caring and regretting (waste). Those who govern the nation must cherish the people as the wealth (of the nation), and not be wasteful and extravagant. Those who govern the body must cherish their vital energy-breaths, and not cause them to flee.
夫為嗇，是謂早服。早，先也。服，得也。夫獨愛民財，愛精氣，則能先得天道也。
“Only by being thrifty can one say they have prepared early”
Early, here, refers to prioritizing. Prepared, here, refers to obtaining. So, it is only by cherishing the people as the wealth (of the nation), and by cherishing the vital energy-breaths, that one can prioritize obtaining the Way of Heaven.
早服謂之重積德。先得天道，是謂重積得於己也
“To be prepared early means resolving to accumulate Virtue”
The first priority should be to obtain the Way of Heaven. This means appreciating the gravity of obtaining it in oneself.
重積德則無不剋，剋，勝也。重積德於己，則無不勝。
“By placing importance on accumulating Virtue, nothing is insurmountable”
To overcome means victory. By appreciating the gravity of accumulating Virtue, one will never be defeated.
無不剋則莫知其極，無不剋勝，則莫知有知己德之窮極也。
“When nothing is insurmountable, limits are unknown”
When nothing is insurmountable, nobody thinks about what they have, or whether their Virtue is destitute or limitless.
莫知其極可以有國。莫知己德者有極，則可以有社稷，為民致福。
“When limits are unknown, there can be a nation”
When nobody presumes to know the limits of Virtue, the provinces and their people can be blessed.

有國之母，可以長久。國身同也。母，道也。人能保身中之道，使精氣不勞，五神不苦，則可以長久。
“Possessing the mother of the nation, one’s rule will have longevity”
For the nation and the body, this is the same. The mother means “Dao.” People can protect the body and keep Dao within when the vital energy-breaths are not over-exerted. Then the five spirits[108] will not suffer, and longevity will continue.

是謂深根固蒂，人能以氣為根，以精為蒂，如樹根不深則拔，蒂不堅則落。言當深藏其氣，固守其精，使無漏泄。
“This is called deepening the roots and strengthening the stalk”
People can use energy-breath to work the root, and use vital essence to work the stalk. Similarly, if a tree’s roots are not deep, it will be uprooted, and a stalk that is not firm will fall. This suggests deepening and accumulating energy-breath, while strengthening vital essence. Then there will be no leaking or flowing out.[109]
長生久視之道。深根固蒂者，乃長生久視之道。
“Long life endures by observing the Dao”
By deepening the roots and solidifying the stalk, you will lengthen your life and continue to observe Dao.

FIFTY-NINE

For those deeply committed to Daoist self-cultivation, thrift suggests here that one must avoid squandering their attention on desires, over-indulging their senses, and expending their spiritual vitality (jing-shen) on emotional outbursts. Such activities are commonly said, in Daoist writing, to detach one from Dao within them. Thus, persisting in internal thriftiness “deepens the root and strengthens the stalk” (see second last line of DDJ59) – it sends our roots deeper into the soil of Dao, nourishing the body and spirit as we are nurtured by the Virtue of the Heavens (Nature).

In chapter 67 (below), Lao Zi lists the “three treasures” of his practice: kindness, foregoing, and humility. The second of these treasures can be further informed by the “thrift” of chapter 59, though a subtle difference exists between the more habitual “*se*, thrifty, stingy, miserly (嗇)” in chapter 59, and the more consciously responsible “*jian*, forgoing, economical (儉)” in chapter 67.

~ 60 ~

Govern a large state as though boiling a small fish

When Dao reaches all under Heaven
Ghosts will not take over the spirit
It is not that ghosts will not take over the spirit
But that the spirit will not injure the person
It is not that the spirit will not injure the person
But that the Sage also will not injure people
So both of them will not bring injury
Thus, Virtue will intermingle and return

Chapter 60
居位 Inhabiting the Throne

治大國者若烹小鮮。鮮，魚。烹小魚不去腸、不去鱗、不敢撓，恐其糜也。治國煩則下亂，治身煩則精散。
“Govern a large state as though boiling a small fish”
When boiling a small fish, the intestines are not removed, the scales are not removed, and you shouldn’t dare touch it for fear that it will become mashed. Governing the state with vexation brings chaos to those below. Governing the body with vexation causes the spiritual vitality to scatter.

以道蒞天下，其鬼不神。以道德居位治天下，則鬼不敢以其精神犯人也。
“When Dao reaches all under Heaven, ghosts will not take over the spirit”
When Virtue inhabits the throne[110] and governs the nation according to Dao, ghosts do not dare violate the spiritual vitality in human beings.
非其鬼不神，其神不傷人。其鬼非無精神也，非不入正，不能傷自然之人。
“It is not that ghosts will not take over the spirit, but that the spirit will not injure the person.”
Ghosts are not without spiritual vitality. It is not that they are unable to enter morally strong people, but that they are unable to injure those who

follow the simplicity of nature (zi ran).
非其神不傷人，聖人亦不傷。非鬼神不能傷害人。以聖人在位不傷害人，故鬼不敢干之也。
“It is not that the spirit will not injure the person, but that the Sage also will not injure people”
It is not that ghosts and spirits are unable to injure and kill people, but that a Sage in the throne will not injure and kill people. Thus, ghosts will not dare to oppose them.
夫兩不相傷，鬼與聖人俱兩不相傷也。
“So both of them will not bring injury”
Ghosts obey the Sage and so neither will injure the other.
故德交歸焉。夫兩不相傷，則人得治於陽，鬼神得治於陰，人得保全其性命，鬼得保其精神，故德交歸焉。
“Thus, Virtue will intermingle and return”
These two do not injure each other. People obtain order through yang, while ghosts and spirits obtain order through yin. People obtain the protection and health of their pure nature (xing) and destiny-life-force (ming). Ghosts obtain the protection of their spiritual vitality. As a result, Virtue intermingles and returns.

SIXTY

Lao Zi explains that one must be careful not to injure their spiritual energies, and so should consider the method of cooking a small fish, taking great care not to upset the impurities within and cause them to spread throughout. Heshang Gong explains that, when cooking a small fish, neither the scales nor the intestines are removed, and so care is taken not to let impurities contaminate it. In governing a nation, the potential for anger, resentment, violence, and revolt is always present. In self-cultivation, the potential for distraction, desire, frustration, and discouragement are always present. The more force and effort one applies, in either case, the more likely they are to set these forces loose. Trying to contain them once set loose is like trying to cage an army of ghosts. They cannot be forced and they cannot be contained – the only way to bring them back to a peaceful state is by cultivating Virtue.[111]

When the heart-mind (the throne) is occupied by spiritual intelligence (the Sage), it is also more difficult to be overthrown by the negativity of others. As Heshang Gong states, “*It is not that (spirits) are unable to enter morally strong people, but that they are unable to injure those who follow the simplicity of nature (zi ran).*” Those submerged in negativity or overwhelmed by emotions will have difficulty not expressing their negativity, and may need to get others emotional so that they can communicate with them on a lower frequency.

To defend against this, one may need to employ all of the sagely strategies for responding to aggressors laid out in chapters 66-79.

~ 61 ~

The greatness of a great state lies in it being beneath the current

It is the junction of the world
It is the female of the world

The female always uses gentleness to overcome the male
And by gentleness puts herself underneath him

Thus, the greatness of a state
Lies in being below the small state
So that it can absorb the small state
The small state is then brought under the large state
So that it can absorb from the large state
Then again, the low absorbs
And again, the low becomes absorbed

The large state limits its desires
To uniting the efforts of farmers
The small state limits its desires
To the profitability of professions
These two both attain to their desires
When the large properly puts itself below

Chapter 61
謙德 The Virtue of Humility

大國者下流，治大國，當如居下流，不逆細微。
“The greatness of a great state lies in it being beneath the current”
To govern a large state requires residing below the current, and not rejecting all that is small.

天下之交，大國，天下士民之所交會。
“It is the junction of the world”
The large state is where the world’s scholars meet and collaborate.
天下之牝。牝者，陰類也。柔謙和而不昌也。

“It is the female of the world”
Female is of the yin category: Soft and pliant, modest, harmonious, and not flashy.

牝常以靜勝牡，女所以能屈男，陰勝陽，以，安靜不先求之也。
“The female always uses gentleness to overcome the male”
A woman can bend a man’s will. Yin conquers yang. A woman does this by being calm and gentle, and not putting her demands first.
以靜為下。陰道以安靜為謙下。
“And, by gentleness, puts herself underneath him”
The yin of Dao, through tranquility and gentleness, humbles and lowers (all things.)
故大國以下小國，則取小國，能謙下之，則常有之。
“Thus, the greatness of a state lies in being below the small state, so that it can absorb the small state”
By being humbly beneath (the small state), (the large state) can always possess it.
小國以下大國，則取大國。此言國無大小，能持謙畜人，則無過失也。
“The small state is then brought under the large state so that it can absorb from the large state”
This says that when a nation no longer distinguishes the large from the small, it can support humble farmers, and so not have too many losses.
故或下以取，或下而取。下者謂大國以下小國，小國以下大國，更以義相取。
“Then again, the low absorbs, and again the low becomes absorbed”
“The low,” here, refers to the large state because the large state has put itself below the small state. The small state, having the large state below it, enjoys righteousness and mutual benefit.

大國不過欲兼畜人，大國不失下，則兼併小國而牧畜之。
“The large state limits its desires to uniting the efforts of farmers”
The large state does not lose its position underneath, and so combines the small states’ farmers and livestock.
小國不過欲入事人。使為臣僕。
“The small state limits its desires to the profitability of professions “
It allocates the use of ministers and servants.

夫兩者各得其所欲，大者宜為下。大國小國各欲得其所，大國又宜為謙下。

“These two both attain to their desires when the large properly puts itself below”

With the large state and small states each desiring to profit their people, the large state returns appropriately to humbly putting itself below.

SIXTY-ONE

The great state putting itself below the small state could be understood as a method of emptying, or humbling, the heart-mind (considered the emperor of the body and house of the spirit) so as to cultivate qi. As qi supports the spirit, and spirit supports the good harmony of elements in the body or nation, the spirit secures life in the body and allows qi to also reside there. Guan Zi’s *Purifying the Heart-Mind (Bai Xin)* describes this method as it pertains to internal cultivation (see especially the first line in the excerpt below). Note that in “Discourse Record of Perfected Danyang,” xing (pure nature) and ming (destiny-life-force) are shown to be some of the various terms for spirit and qi, respectively.[112]

> Holding to a ceremonious outward appearance, respectfully welcome that which approaches.
> Those today who seek its approach require this method to (invite) Dao.
> Without soaring (into the sky), without spilling over, the destiny-life-force (ming) will be extended.
> Harmonize by returning to the center, where both body and pure nature (xing) are preserved.
> Be unified and without division. This is called “knowing Dao.”
> Wishing to be enveloped by it, you must unify to the furthest extent, and solidify that which is protected within. [113]

~ 62 ~

The Dao is the mystery of all things
It is the excellent man's treasure
It is the bad man's refuge

Pleasant words can be used for currency
Acts of reverence can be used for social advancement
Why, then, would bad men be rejected?
When the Son of Heaven is enthroned
Three ministers are appointed
He is given the jade seal
And preceded by four cavalrymen
This, however, is not as good
As sitting down and moving forward in this Dao

Why did the ancients treasure the Dao?
Was it not said: "By it, those who seek, shall obtain
And the guilty will be liberated?"
Thus, the whole world treasures it

Chapter 62
為道 Acting With Dao

道者萬物之奧，奧，藏也。道為萬物之藏，無所不容也。
"The Dao is the mystery of all things"
Mystery, here, means hidden. Dao is hidden in all things. It has no appearance of its own.
善人之寶，善人以道為身寶，不敢違也。
"It is the excellent man's treasure"
Men of excellence treasure Dao in their bodies and do not dare to be apart from it.
不善人之所保。道者，不善人之保倚也。遭患逢急，猶知自悔卑下。
"It is the bad man's refuge"
Dao is relied on by bad men to protect them. When they come across suffering and urgent situations, they know to repent and humble themselves below it.

美言可以市，美言者獨可於市耳。夫市交易而退，不相宜善言美語，求者欲疾得，賣者欲疾售也
“Pleasant words can be used for currency”
Pleasant words alone can be used for trade. This exchange makes for ease, and retirement. Beautiful language is not the same as appropriate and good speech. Demanding such words from people is to have a desire for illness; those who sell these words hope to sell such an illness.
尊行可以加入。加，別也。人有尊貴之行，可以別異於凡人，未足以尊道。
“Acts of reverence can be used for social advancement”
Improve, here, means “to distinguish.” Men praise lofty activities which will help them to distinguish themselves as different from ordinary people. Some attain this by praising Dao.
人之不善，何棄之有。人雖不善，當以道化之。蓋三皇之前，無有棄民，德化淳也。
“Why, then, would bad men be rejected?”
Bad men can be reformed by Dao. Under the protection of the Three Sovereigns,[114] people were never rejected. They were reformed by Virtue and became honest and simple.
故立天子，置三公，欲使教化不善之人。
“When the Son of Heaven is enthroned, three ministers are appointed”
In hopes of teaching and reforming bad men.
雖有拱璧以先駟馬，不如坐進此道。雖有美璧先駟馬而至，故不如坐進此道。
“He is given the jade seal, and preceded by four cavalrymen. This, however, is not as good as sitting down and moving forward in this Dao”
Having the jade seal and being preceded by four cavalrymen is not as good as sitting down and moving forward in this Dao.

古之所以貴此道者，何不日以求得？古之所以貴此道者，不日日遠行求索，近得之於身。
“Why did the ancients treasure the Dao? Was it not said: ‘By it, those who seek, shall obtain?”
The ancients treasured the Dao. They did not seek for it day after day, far and wide, but rather obtained it from nearby, within themselves.
有罪以免耶，有罪謂遭亂世，闇君妄行形誅，修道則可以解死，免於眾也。

“’And the guilty will be liberated?’”
To be guilty means to be caught up in the chaos of the world where foolish rulers act recklessly in sentencing people to execution. Those who study Dao may, thereby, escape death. It liberates the masses.
故為天下貴。道德洞遠，無不覆濟，全身治國，恬然無為，故可為天下貴也。
“Thus, the whole world treasures it”
Dao and Virtue are like an endless treasure house, where nothing that goes in is not returned. The body can be maintained and the nation governed by this natural calm and effortlessness. For this reason, the whole world treasures (Dao and Virtue).

SIXTY-TWO

While flattery, promotion, and awesome displays of power might win people over to gain position, sell goods, or encourage allegiance, the ultimate treasure, Dao, can only be won by a sincere heart and mind. Lao Zi explains that the bad man must repent so as to find his way into Dao’s favour, while the good man treasures Dao within himself so as to never let it escape his embrace. Both the good and bad must forget any sense that they can convince Dao of their internal merits – they must be pure within in order to secure Dao’s protection.

~ 63 ~

Act without acting
Work without working
Taste without tasting
Treat the great as small
And the many as few
Respond to hatred with virtue

In this world, difficult endeavours
Must be approached through what is easy
Deal with what is wide through what is thin
In this world, all great endeavours
Must be approached through what is easy

Therefore sages, with their focus on the end
Do not attack what is great
Thus, they can complete great things

So, frivolous promises surely lack sincerity
Abundant ease ensures abundant difficulty
Therefore, sages prepare for difficulty to arise
And thus finish without difficulty

Chapter 63
恩始 The Gift of Beginning Early

為無為，因成循故，無所造作。
“Act without acting”
Things can be completed by following the state of events and not creating additional tasks.
事無事，預有備，除煩省事也。
“Work without working”
Prepare in advance in order to eliminate worries and minimize tasks.
味無味。深思遠慮，味道意也。
“Taste without tasting”
Deeply consider issues that are far off. Have the intention to taste Dao.

大小多少，陳其戒令也。欲大反小，欲多反少，自然之道也。
“Treat the great as small and the many as few”
By fixing your resolution at the first appearance of a warning, your desire for the great to become small or the many to become few (will be aided by) the spontaneous nature of Dao.
報怨以德。脩道行善，絕禍於未生也。
“Respond to hatred with virtue”
When seeking Dao and practicing excellence, stop calamities before they arise.

圖難於其易，欲圖難事，當於易時，未及成也。
“In this world, difficult endeavours must be approached through what is easy”
Desiring to plan for difficult tasks, take charge of them while they are easy, rather than catching up at the end.
為大於其細。欲為大事，必作於小，禍亂從小來也。
“Deal with what is wide through what is thin”
Wishing to manage great tasks, it is important to work on what is small. Misfortune and chaos can arise from what is small.

天下難事必作於易，天下大事必作於細。從易生難，從細生著。
“In this world, all great endeavours must be approached through what is easy”
In this world, great endeavours must be approached through what is tiny. What is easy gives birth to what is difficult; what is tiny gives birth to what is fully developed.
是以聖人終不為大，故能成其大。處謙虛，天下共歸之也。
“Therefore sages, with their focus on the end, do not attack what is great. Thus, they can complete great things”
Staying humble and empty, the whole world returns to them.

夫輕諾必寡信，不重言也。
“So, frivolous promises surely lack sincerity”
Do not take words too seriously.
多易必多難。不慎患也。
“Abundant ease ensures abundant difficulty”
Without caution, there will be suffering.

是以聖人猶難之，聖人動作舉事，猶進退，重難之，欲塞其源也。
“Therefore, sages prepare for difficulty to arise”
Sages move into action when issues arise. Whether issues are advancing or retreating, heavy or light, they want to stop them at the source.
故終無難矣。聖人終生無患難之事，猶避害深也
“And thus finish without difficulty”
Sages finish life without worry or difficult tasks by staying far away from harm.

SIXTY-THREE

As shown in chapter 62, the greatest loss is the loss of Dao. To prepare early in this matter is to keep watch over the heart and mind for sprouts of resentment,[115] arrogance, selfishness, hatred, entitlement, inauthenticity, inconsideration, and any other tendencies that can easily grow in the shadows and spread like a dangerous mold. Deep attention to internal hygiene is an indispensible exercise for those who wish to refine their character.

~ 64 ~

That which is stable is easy to hold
That which has not yet shown a sign is easy to plan for
That which is brittle is easy to crumble
That which is small is easy to scatter

Act on what has not yet come into existence
Bring order to what has not yet gone into chaos

A tree trunk which you can barely wrap your arms around
Began as insignificant, and thin as a hair
A nine storey tower began with the movement of dirt
The journey of 1000 li began with a single step

Those who take control are defeated
Those who cling will lose
Therefore, sages do not take control and so are not defeated
They do not take hold and so do not lose

When people pursue endeavours
They are usually a short distance from finishing
When defeated
By being as cautious in the end as you are in the beginning
You will not be defeated in your endeavours

Therefore, sages desire what is not desired
They do not value things that are difficult to obtain
And they teach what is not taught

Returning to what the masses have disregarded
They protect the spontaneous nature of all things
And do not dare try to control them

Chapter 64
守微 Preserving the Small

其安易持，治身治國安靜者，易守持也。
“That which is stable is easy to hold”

When governing the body, or governing a nation, that which is calm and stable is easy to protect and hold onto.
其未兆易謀，情欲禍患未有形兆時，易謀止也。
“That which has not yet shown a sign is easy to plan for”
When strong emotions, desires, disasters, and worries, have not yet shown any portent, they are easy to plan for and stop.
其脆易破，禍亂未動於朝，情欲未見於色，如脆弱易破除。
“That which is brittle is easy to crumble”
Misfortune and chaos which have not yet begun, and desires and strong emotions which have not yet appeared, all resemble what is brittle and weak. Thus, they are easy to destroy and eliminate.
其微易散。其未彰著，微小易散去也。
“That which is small is easy to scatter”
That which is minutely small, and not yet clearly manifest, is easy to scatter and eliminate.

為之於未有，欲有所為，當於未有萌芽之時塞其端也。
“Act on what has not yet come into existence”
The desire to act is like a sprout which has not yet pushed through the soil, yet is not blocked from above.
治之於未亂。治身治國於未亂之時，當豫閉其門也。
“Bring order to what has not yet gone into chaos”
To govern the body, or state, which has not yet become chaotic, is as easy as closing the gates.

合抱之木生於毫末；從小成大。
“A tree trunk which you can barely wrap your arms around began as insignificant, and thin as a hair”
This refers to moving from small to large.
九層之臺起於累土；從卑立高。
“A nine storey tower began with the movement of dirt”
This refers to moving from a humble status to being established in a high position.
千里之行始於足下。從近至遠。
“The journey of 1000 li[116] began with a single step”
This refers to moving from near to distant.

為者敗之，有為於事，廢於自然；有為於義，廢於仁；有為於色，廢於精神也。
“Those who take control are defeated”
Trying to control and interfere abandons the simplicity of nature. Trying to force righteousness discards humanity. Trying to control appearances abandons the spiritual vitality.
執者失之。執利遇患，執道全身，堅持不得，推讓反還。
“Those who cling will lose”
Clinging to profit brings about worry. Clinging to Dao maintains the body. Clenching the hand does not allow one to obtain anything, while opening it and giving something may bring more in return.
是以聖人無為故無敗，聖人不為華文，不為色利，不為殘賊，故無敗壞。
“Therefore, sages do not take control, and so are not defeated”
Sages do not partake in flowery sophistication. They do not try to make things appear of more worth than they are, and they do not get involved in punishing traitors. As a result, they are not defeated or ruined.
無執故無失。聖人有德以教愚，有財以與貧，無所執藏，故無所失於人也。
“They do not take hold and so do not lose”
Sages posses Virtue and use it to teach simplicity. They possess wealth and use it to share with the poor. They do not clench and hoard these things, and so are without any place to lose them.

民之從事，常於幾成而敗之。從，為也。民之為事，常於功德幾成，而貪位好名，奢泰盈滿而自敗之也。
“When people pursue endeavours, they are usually a short distance from finishing when defeated”
The people, in trying to accomplish their goals, are often far closer than they realize to perfecting their Virtue when greed for position, and love of reputation, cause them to exaggerate and exalt themselves, to overflow with self-satisfaction, and thereby cause their own defeat.
慎終如始，則無敗事。終當如始，不當懈怠。
“By being as cautious in the end as you are in the beginning, you will not be defeated in your endeavours”
Treat the end the same as the beginning – do not become idle and negligent.

是以聖人欲不欲，聖人欲人所不欲。人欲彰顯，聖人欲伏光；人欲文飾，聖人欲質朴；人欲色，聖人欲於德。
“Therefore, sages desire what is not desired”
Sages desire what others do not desire. Others desire to be noticed. The Sage desires to conceal his light. Others desire ornamentation. Sages desire what is simple and natural. Others desire appearances. Sages desire to be Virtuous.
不貴難得之貨；聖人不眩為服，不賤石而貴玉。
“They do not value things that are difficult to obtain”
Sages do not get excited over fashionable clothes, cheap stones, or valuable jade.
學不學，聖人學人所不能學。人學智詐，聖人學自然；人學治世，聖人學治身；守道真也 。
“And they teach what is not taught”
Sages teach what others cannot teach. Others teach how to be clever and deceptive. Sages teach the simplicity of nature. Others teach about governing the world. Sages teach about governing the self and holding the true Dao within.
復眾人之所過；眾人學問反，過本為末，過實為華。復之者，使反本也。
“Returning to what the masses have disregarded”
The masses learn through questions and answers, and disregard the root as though it were insignificant. They disregard what is most valuable and pursue flowery outward appearances. The Sage brings them back to the root.
以輔萬物之自然。教人反本實者，欲以輔助萬物自然之性也。
“They protect the spontaneous nature of all things”
In teaching people to return to the root[117] and appreciate its supreme value, their desire is to foster the intrinsic simplicity of nature in all things.
而不敢為。聖人動作因循，不敢有所造為，恐遠本也。
“And do not dare try to control them”
Sages are aroused to action in accordance with events. They do not dare to use superfluous effort for fear of straying from the root.

SIXTY-FOUR
If people took times of health as the opportune moment to exercise and eat more healthily, illness and physical disabilities would be far less common in the world. As Qi Bo explains

to the Yellow Emperor in the *Nei Jing, Su Wen*, chapter two:

> As for Dao, the sages practice it; the foolish decorate themselves with it. To accord with yin and yang leads to life; to oppose them leads to death. To accord with yin and yang leads to order; to oppose them leads to chaos… Therefore, sages did not establish order to stop illness, they established order before illness arose. They did not establish order to stop chaos, they established order before chaos arose. To provide medicine after illness is already affixed, or instill order after chaos has already ensued, this is like digging a well after one is already thirsty, or fashioning weapons after war has already begun.[118]

While chapters 63 and 64 caution wariness, they also teach the importance of planting seeds, of making the small efforts that eventually bring great results. For example, Heshang Gong says, “Clenching the hand does not allow one to obtain anything, while opening it and giving something may bring more in return.” Small generosities may build unforseen relationships and connections. Small kindnesses and acts of virtue foster harmony and plant the seeds that grow into fields of social collaboration, giving vitality and purpose to communities and the people within them.

~ 65 ~

The ancient masters who aligned society with Dao
Did not do so by enlightening the people
But rather, fostered their simplicity

Difficulty in governing people
Comes from a wealth of wisdom
Hence, when knowledge is used to govern the nation
This results in thievery from the nation
Not using knowledge to govern the nation
Blesses the nation

Understand the broader application of these two principles
There is an infinite understanding
Which can be found in these principles
This is called Fathomless Virtue
Fathomless Virtue, profound and far-reaching
Following it, things return back to their nature
Arriving at great submission

Chapter 65
淳德 The Virtue of Simplicity

古之善為道者，非以明民，將以愚之。說古之善以道治身及治國者，不以道教民明智巧詐也，將以道德教民，使質朴不詐偽。
“The ancient masters who aligned society with Dao, did not do so by enlightening the people, but rather fostered their simplicity”
The ancient masters employed Dao to govern the body, and applied this same skill to governing the state. They did not teach Dao to the people as intellectual knowledge that would help them to be clever and deceitful. To transmit Dao and Virtue to the people is to teach them to be simple and natural, rather than artificial and deceitful.

民之難治，以其智多。民之所以難治者，以其智多而為巧偽。
“Difficulty in governing people comes from a wealth of wisdom”

People are difficult to govern because they use their abundant knowledge to be clever and deceitful.
故以智治國，國之賊；使智慧之人治國之政事，必遠道德，妄作威福，為國之賊也。
“Hence, when knowledge is used to govern the nation, this results in thievery from the nation”
When people of knowledge and intelligence govern the affairs of the nation, they are sure to go far from Dao and Virtue. In their foolishness, they act pompously when the nation receives blessings and become thieves of the nation.
不以智治國，國之福。不使智慧之人治國之政事，則民守正直，不為邪飾，上下相親，君臣同力，故為國之福也。
“Not using knowledge to govern the nation, blesses the nation”
When people of shrewd intelligence are not involved in governing the affairs of the nation, the people embrace correctness and uprightness. They do not do evil things or act deceptively. The upper and lower classes treat each other like one family, and the emperor unifies their strength. This causes a nation to be blessed.

知此兩者亦稽式。兩者謂智與不智也。常能智者為賊，不智者為福，是治身治國之法式也。
“Understand the broader application of these two principles”
“These two” means using knowledge, and not using knowledge. It is common for learnedness to create thieves, and for un-learnedness to create good fortune. This same pattern applies to both governing the body, and governing the nation.
常知稽式，是謂玄德。玄，天也。能知治身及治國之法式，是謂與天同德也。
“There is an infinite understanding which can be found in these principles. This is called Fathomless Virtue”
Fathomless, here, means Heavenly. If one understands the principles of governing the body, they will understand the principles of governing the nation. Of this, it is said “to follow Heaven is to unite with Virtue.”
玄德深矣，遠矣，玄德之人深不可測，遠不可及也。
“Fathomless Virtue, profound and far-reaching”
The person of fathomless Virtue is immeasurably deep. Their depth cannot be fully reached.

與物反矣！玄德之人與萬物反異，萬物欲益己，玄德施與人也。
“Following it, things return”
The person of fathomless Virtue helps all things to reverse abberations. The myriad things desire to profit themselves, while (the person of) fathomless Virtue brings assistance to others.
然後乃至於大順。玄德與萬物反異，故能至大順。順天理也。
“Back to their nature, arriving at great submission”
Fathomless Virtue helps the myriad things to reverse abberations. Thus, they can arrive at great submission. This means submitting to Heaven’s intrinsic order.

SIXTY-FIVE

Though many businesses suffer for not listening to the experiences of those in lower ranks, much like diseases often develop from persistently ignored discomforts, organized structures can also fail from “too many cooks in the kitchen” syndrome. Where organized leadership is necessary, for example in an army, a large kitchen staff, or the human body, too many “better ideas” may result in analysis-paralysis – hesitation leading to ineffectiveness, or even incompetence and inefficiency.

In the body, the brain is the hub of the nervous system where orders are received and sent out, but it is not the very top of the chain of command. The heart processes emotions and stress, as well as a sense of balance and well being. If the heart-mind/emperor is lost, the brain can do little to change this, and the orders sent out by the brain will reflect this confusion, resulting in disorder elsewhere in the body. Thus, the intellectual mind must serve the spirit, housed in the heart-mind, and allow the spirit to guide the body’s affairs with its intrinsic harmony and balance. This, in turn, strengthens intelligence by allowing the heart-mind to perceive clearly, without excessive thought processes blocking what appears plainly in front of it. This is to absorb through the shen ming (神明),[119] the “spiritual intelligence or spiritual illumination” that is reached through the “art of the heart-mind (xin shu/xin fa)” described throughout Daoist meditation texts.[120]

~ 66 ~

The rivers and oceans
Can be the kings to so many valley streams
Because they are good at being below them
Thus, they can be the kings to so many valley streams

Therefore, if you want to be above people
You must speak as though below them
Desiring to lead the people
You must put yourself behind them

Therefore the Sage resides above,
And the people do not feel his weight
He resides in front
And the people do not feel mistreated
As a result, all under Heaven advance happily
And are not embittered

It is because he does not force anyone
That the world cannot respond to his force

Chapter 66
後己 Leaving Oneself Behind

江海所以能為百谷王者，以其善下之，故能為百谷王。江海以卑，故眾流歸之，若民歸就王。以卑下，故能為百谷王也。
“The rivers and oceans can be the kings to so many valley streams because they are good at being below them. Thus, they can be the kings to so many valley streams.”
It is because the large oceans are humble and low that the currents all flow towards them. In the same way, the people are drawn towards the king. It is by being low and humble that the king can rule the hundred families.
是以欲上民，欲在民之上也。
“Therefore, if you want to be above people”
Desiring to be the people’s superior
必以言下之；法江海處謙虛。

“You must speak as though below them”
You must follow the oceans, making yourself humble and empty.
欲先民，欲在民之前也。
“Desiring to lead the people”
Desiring to be in front of the people
必以身後之。先人而後己也。
“You must put yourself behind them”
Lead others by putting yourself behind them
是以聖人處上而民不重，聖人在民上為主，不以尊貴虐下，故民戴而不為重。
“Therefore the Sage resides above, and the people do not feel his weight”
The Sage places the people in the position of honour, of the host. He does not perpetuate any reverence of the wealthy, or oppression of the poor. Thus, the people are supportive of him and do not feel weighed down.
處前而民不害。聖人在民前，不以光明蔽後，民親之若父母，無有欲害之心也。
“He resides in front, and the people do not feel mistreated”
The Sage stands in front of the people, but does not block the light of truth from shining behind him. Like the peoples’ fathers and mothers, he has no wish to injure their minds.
是以天下樂推而不厭。聖人恩深愛厚，視民如赤子，故天下樂推進以為主，無有厭也。
“As a result, all under Heaven advance happily, and are not embittered”
The Sage’s kindness is profound and his affectionate love is plentiful. He looks after the people as though they were infants. Thus, the whole world pushes forward happily, treating the Sage as their chief and not holding onto any bitterness.
以其不爭，天下無厭聖人時，是由聖人不與人爭先後也。
“It is because he does not force anyone”
No one in the world dislikes the Sage’s rule, so all unite under the Sage and do not fall into man’s contentious ways of fighting with those ahead or behind them.
故天下莫能與之爭。言人皆有為，無有與吾爭無為。
“That the world cannot respond to his force”
This is to say that all people use force, but there is no way to resist what does not use any force.

SIXTY-SIX

Though a leadership role suggests the highest position with many people serving underneath, leadership is best viewed as the most humble position. While those of lower rank serve one leader, the leader must serve everyone – they are ultimately responsible for the outcome of everyone's job, for the effectiveness and coordination of everyone on their team, and so are in fact the lowest servant of that team.

An ancient metaphor for good leadership, appearing in chapters 11 and 39 of the *Dao De Jing*, is "the hub of the wheel" – the emptiness at the center which unites all spokes and allows for them to turn in unison. This, of course, represents the ultimate leader – Dao, the empty, fathomless principle upon which all things are based – but also describes the importance of selflessness in a leader. If the leader is not empty of the selfish desire to dominate, the wheel cannot turn smoothly and will not last. Thus, he or she must take the role of the lowest servant, serving all for the good function of the unit, allowing it to turn effortlessly and without bearing the resistance of a center that cannot go unnoticed.

~ 67 ~

Everyone says my way is vast
And yet, it appears to be foolish
Because it is great
It appears foolish
As though reflecting a time long since past
It is delicate

I have three treasures
Which I hold close and protect

The first is kindness
The second is economy
The third is not brazenly taking precedence over the world

Through kindness, there can be courage
Through economy, there can be generosity
Through not brazenly taking precedence over the world
I can fashion vessels of longevity

Now, if one neglects kindness in courage
Neglects economy in generosity
Neglects humility in being at the forefront
They will die.

So, kindness in times of war brings victory
And protecting it brings strength and stability
Heaven will bring its aid
And kindness will be protected

Chapter 67
三寶 Three Treasures

天下皆謂我道大，似不肖。老子言：天下謂我德大，我則佯愚似不肖。
“Everyone says my way is vast. And yet, it appears to be foolish”

Lao Zi says: “When the world declares my Virtue to be vast, I feign stupidity and appear to be foolish.”
夫唯大，故似不肖，唯獨名德大者為身害，故佯愚似若不肖。無所分別，無所割截，不賤人而自責。
“Because it is great, it appears foolish”
Those who hold a reputation for great virtue bring trouble to themselves. Hence, Lao Zi feigns stupidity and appears foolish. By not distinguishing, separating, categorizing, or alienating, he does not demean people or exalt himself.
若肖久矣。肖，善也。謂辨惠也。若大辨惠之人，身高自貴行察察之政所從來久矣。
“As though reflecting a time long since past”
“Reflecting” here, means appearing to be excellent. People who distinguish and exalt themselves are scrutinized and compared against the kingdoms of the past.
其細也夫。言辨惠者唯如小人，非長者。
“It is delicate”
In seeking recognition and favour, only petty men exalt themselves. They will not last.

我有三寶，持而保之。老子言：我有三寶，抱持而保倚。
“I have three treasures, which I hold close and protect”
Lao Zi says “I have three treasures which I hold, defend, and rely on.”
一曰慈，愛百姓若赤子。
“The first is kindness”
To love all people as though they were infants[121]
二曰儉，賦斂若取之於己也。
“The second is economy”
To reduce taxes as though I were taking them from myself.
三曰不敢為天下先。執謙退，不為倡始也。
“The third is not brazenly taking precedence over the world”
Holding firmly onto humility, standing back, and not initiating with force.

慈故能勇，以慈仁，故能勇於忠孝也。
“Through kindness, there can be courage”
Because of their kindness and consideration of others, people can be courageous and devoted to filial duties.

儉故能廣，天子身能節儉，故民日用廣矣。
“Through economy, there can be generosity”
When the Son of Heaven is frugal towards himself, the people can be generous in their daily affairs.
不敢為天下先，不為天下首先。
“Through not brazenly taking precedence over the world”
By not pretending to be the chief leader
故能成器長。成器長，謂得道人也。我能為得道人之長也。
“I can fashion vessels of longevity”
Fashioning vessels of longevity means helping people to attain Dao. “I can help bring about the longevity of those who attain Dao.”

今舍慈且勇，今世人舍慈仁，但為勇武。
“Now, if one neglects kindness in courage”
If someone neglects kindness and consideration of others, while acting courageously and aggressively;
舍儉且廣，舍其儉約，但為奢泰。
“Neglects economy in generosity”
If they neglect their budget, and act wastefully and debaucherously;
舍後且先，舍其後己，但為人先。
“Neglects humility in being at the forefront”
If they neglect to humble themselves, and put themselves at the forefront,
死矣！所行如此，動入死地。
“They will die.”
Such behaviour is like walking into a deathtrap.

夫慈以戰則勝，以守則固。夫慈仁者，百姓親附，并心一意，故以戰則勝敵，以守衛則堅固。
“So, kindness in times of war brings victory, and protecting it brings strength and stability”
Having kindness and consideration of others brings the hundred families to care for both their own families and those of others with the unified focus of their hearts. This results in a resolute and stable defense, and thus, if there is war, victory over enemies.
天將救之，以慈衛之。天將救助善人，必與慈仁之性，使能自營助也。
“Heaven will bring its aid, and kindness will be protected”

Heaven gives assistance to people of excellence. It is imperative that all abide by their intrinsically kind and considerate natures, so that they too may be assisted and protected.

SIXTY-SEVEN

Chapter 67 begins by demonstrating the importance of being comfortable out of the spotlight. Heshang Gong comments:

> Those who hold a reputation for great virtue bring trouble to themselves. Hence, Lao Zi feigns stupidity and appears foolish. By not distinguishing, separating, categorizing, or alienating, he does not demean people or exalt himself.

In today's world, with so many ways to bask in the digital spotlight, it is easy to think of ourselves as special or better than others and then become confused and depressed when we fall out of that spotlight and feel insignificant. Worries, sadness, fear, and anger can all crop up from our sense of acceptance or lack thereof. Thus, it is necessary not to rely or prop ourselves up on renown, fame, and reputation – "name" (名 , ming), as it is often referred to in the *Dao De Jing*. Consider chapter one – "the name that can be named is not the eternal name." This "name" of ours is ultimately meaningless. In the Eternal, glory, renown, and reputation are illusions. The value we give to them is merely an illusory construct of the mind.

In the temporal world, however, Lao Zi practices "three treasures":

Cí(慈): love, charity, mercy – kindness
Ji ǎ n(儉): forgoing, moderation, simplicity – economy
bù g ǎ n wéi tiānxià xiān (不敢為天下先): not brazenly taking precedence over the world

While these "three treasures" are three, they are also one. For example, not putting oneself first requires forgoing, and practices kindness; forgoing requires not putting oneself first, and allows for generosity and kindness; kindness requires moderating one's own desires, while putting others first. This is the external practice of the three treasures. Aside from practicing these as compassion, frugality, and humility, another way to engage all three of these treasures is active empathy – listening to others to understand how they experience the world, speaking less, and putting your own feelings, opinions, or ideas aside as you focus on discovering how that person experiences, and feels about, what it is they're talking about.

What is often missed in reading chapter 67 is that the three treasures of kindness, economy, and humility are presented as the yin counterparts of the chapter's other, more yang, values: courage, generosity, and fostering longevity in others.

Just as someone who amasses physical power can neglect their character and become imbalanced, ultimately weakening themselves in the process, excessive yang (function) can often weaken yin (substance) and so in turn weaken the whole. Thus, to be truly strong, yin

and yang must be balanced – the seeds or roots (yin) must be watered in order to support the fruit (yang). Wishing to be courageous, one must first hold and protect kindness; wishing to be generous, one must first not be extravagant towards themselves; wishing to foster longevity in others, one must be careful not to put themselves first. Given this pairing with "not putting oneself first," vessels of longevity (器長) may also carry a pun referring to the fostering of leadership (長) by not putting oneself first. Thus, these three treasures, while ultimately effective in themselves, are also keys for unlocking the success of courage,[122] generosity,[123] and fostering others.[124]

As with most elements in the *Dao De Jing*, the three treasures can apply to internal practice. As such, kindness is nurturing qi and bringing harmony to the spirit; forgoing is removing thoughts and not indulging in sights, sounds, and activities around oneself; not putting oneself first is transcending the self through the internal practice of the first two treasures.[125]

~ 68 ~

Those who are good at managing armies
Do not encourage warfare
Those who are skilled at warfare
Do not become angry
Those who are skilled at overpowering enemies
Do not clash with them
Those who are skilled at employing people
Put themselves in service to them

This is called the power and virtue of non-combatitiveness
This is called directing people's skills
This is called reflecting Heaven
As it was at the beginning of time

Chapter 68
配天 Reflecting Heaven

善為士者不武，言貴道德，不好武力也。
"Those who are good at managing armies do not encourage warfare"
This is a counsel to value Dao and De, and not dream of military power.
善戰者不怒，善以道戰者，禁邪於胸心，絕禍於未萌，無所誅怒也。
"Those who are skilled at warfare do not become angry"
Those who are skilled in the ways of war do not allow wickedness to enter their hearts, but cut off this source of misfortune before it sprouts. This way, they do not kill in anger..
善勝敵者不與，善以道勝敵者，附近以仁，來遠以德，不與敵爭，而敵自服也。
"Those who are skilled at overpowering enemies do not clash with them"
Those who are skilled in the ways of overpowering enemies remain altruistic with those near them, and draw people from afar by Virtue. They do not fight with enemies but rather dress them in their own uniforms.
善用人者為之下。善用人自輔佐者，常為人執謙下也。
"Those who are skilled at employing people put themselves in service to them"

Those who are skilled at employing people protect themselves by acting subordinate, and always maintaining a position of humility when engaging with others.
是謂不爭之德，謂上為之下也。是乃不與人爭之道德也。
“This is called the power and virtue of non-combatitiveness”
This means that the superior acts as though inferior. In this way, they do not follow along with man’s contentious ways, but adhere to Virtue.
是謂用人之力，能身為人下，是謂用人臣之力也
“This is called directing people’s skills”
The ability of an individual depends on those beneath him. This means that to direct people is to minister their skills.
是謂配天古之極。能行此者，德配天也。是乃古之極要道也。
“This is called reflecting Heaven as it was at the beginning of time”
The ability to act in this way reflects the Virtue of Heaven. It is the most ancient characteristic of Dao.

SIXTY-EIGHT

To fully grasp Lao Zi’s strategy in chapter 68, and understand how “Those who are skilled at overpowering enemies do not clash with them,” it may help to look at chapter 63 in which Lao Zi says:

> Treat the great as small
> And the many as few
> Respond to hatred with virtue

Rather than pushing back hatred with hatred, war may be avoided by responding with kindness. If someone is angry and insulting, by disregarding their aggression, seeking the reason for their pain, and responding to their aggression with kindness, love, and compassion, seeking to help them however you can, you employ the virtue of water – the power and technique of the Sage. As Lao Zi illustrates:

> Those who are skilled at warfare
> Do not become angry
> Those who are skilled at overpowering enemies
> Do not clash with them
> Those who are skilled at employing people
> Put themselves in service to them
> This is called the power and virtue of non-combatitiveness

This “technique” is further explained in the following chapter – chapter 69.

~ 69 ~

In the employment of an army, there is a saying:
“I dare not be the host, but I will be a guest
I dare not advance an inch, but will step back a foot”
This is called advancing without advancing
Embracing without arms
Attacking without an enemy
Guarding without militant force

Misfortune has no greater cause
Than not respecting an enemy
By not respecting an enemy
How much do we risk destroying what is precious?

Hence, armies standing in opposition
Could benefit by standing together
Those who are saddened (by this destruction)
Will be victorious!

Chapter 69
玄用 Utilizing the Fathomless

用兵有言：陳用兵之道。老子疾時用兵，故託己設其義也。
“In the employment of an army, there is a saying”
This is advice for employing military strategy. Lao Zi was troubled by the prevalence of military force during his time. Thus, he tried to transmit a basis of righteousness.
吾不敢為主而為客，主，先也。不敢先舉兵。客者，和而不倡。用兵當承天而後動。
“I dare not be the host, but I will be a guest”
To be “the host” means to be “the first.” Do not be the first to initiate military action. Being the guest is to remain peaceful, and not introduce battle. Use of military force will then accord with Heaven and receive support and momentum.
不敢進寸而退尺。侵人境界，利人財寶，為進；閉門守城，為退。
“I dare not advance an inch, but will step back a foot”

Crossing others' borders to take their treasures and money is advancing an inch. Closing the gates to protect the municipality is stepping back a foot.

是謂行無行，彼遂不止，為天下賊，雖行誅之，不成行列也。
"This is called advancing without advancing"
Advancement without cease is the thief of all under Heaven. Only by terminating this does it not cross every line.
攘無臂，雖欲大怒，若無臂可攘也。
"Embracing without arms"
When desire turns into great anger, it is without arms yet takes possession.
扔無敵，雖欲仍引之，若無敵可仍也。
"Attacking without an enemy"
When desires are continually pursued, they have no enemy but continue to pursue.
執無兵。雖欲執持之，若無兵刃可持用也。何者？傷彼之民罹罪於天，遭不道之君，愍忍喪之痛也。
"Guarding without militant force"
When desires are held onto and protected, this is like not having an army but still putting it to use. How is this so? Injuring others and causing them sorrow is a crime against Heaven. When a ruler who does not follow Dao is encountered, mercy, remorse, and sympathy will accompany the funeral rites.

禍莫大於輕敵。夫禍亂之害，莫大於欺輕敵家，侵取不休，輕戰貪財也。
"Misfortune has no greater cause than not respecting an enemy"
The great turmoil of social upheaval has no greater cause than crossing, and not respecting, an enemy and his territory. Invasions and conquests continue without rest when war is considered to be less significant than one's own greed for wealth.
輕敵，幾喪吾寶。幾，近也。寶，身也。欺輕敵者，近喪身也。
"By not respecting an enemy, how much do we risk destroying what is precious?"
By "how much" is meant "how close." By "what is precious" is meant "the body." By cheating and not respecting an enemy, one comes close to losing their body.

故抗兵相加，兩敵戰也。
“Hence, armies standing in opposition could benefit by standing together”
This refers to two armies at war.
哀者勝矣。哀者慈仁，士卒不遠於死。
“Those who are saddened (by this destruction) will be victorious!”
Those who are saddened are merciful (ci), and considerate of others (ren). They will not have their soldiers sent off to die in foreign lands.

SIXTY-NINE

“Stepping back a foot” appears to suggest the strategy of responding with virtue and winning over an opponent by absorbing them.[126] This is to win without fighting (“advancing without advancing”), to bring them in by their own volition (“embracing without arms”), not treating the other side as an enemy yet resolving the conflict (“attacking without an enemy”), and bringing security and prosperity with this neutralization of conflict (“guarding without militant force”). To achieve this, one accepts the invitation to engage, but does not vie for dominance: “I dare not be a host, but will be a guest; I dare not advance an inch, but will step back a foot.”

~ 70 ~

My words are very easy to understand, very easy to follow
Yet none in the world are able to understand them
None are able to put them into practice

Words have a lineage, actions have a ruler
It is because there is no knowledge (of these things)
That I am not known
Those who understand me are rare
And so, those few I treasure
It is for these reasons
That the Sage wraps himself in coarse cloth
While concealing jade in his heart

Chapter 70
知難 The Difficulty of Knowing

章吾言甚易知，甚易行。老子言：吾所言省而易知，約而易行。
“My words are very easy to understand, very easy to follow”
Lao Zi says, “My speech is concise and easy to understand. These precepts are easy to follow.”
天下莫能知，莫能行。人惡柔弱，好剛強也
“Yet none in the world are able to understand them, none are able to put them into practice”
People hate the soft and pliant, but like the hard and tough.

言有宗，事有君。我所言有宗祖根本，事有君臣上下，世人不知者，非我之無德，心與我之反也
“Words have a lineage, actions have a ruler”
(In other words) “My words come from a lineage of ancestors connected to the root. My actions have a ruler who ministers over what is above and below. The people of today’s generations do not know of these. Were I without Virtue, my mind would have also led me away from them.”
夫唯無知，是以不我知。夫唯世人之無知者，是我德之暗，不見於外，窮微極妙，故無知也。

“It is because there is no knowledge (of these things), that I am not known”
It is because people today do not know of these things that my secret virtue is not seen on the surface. Infinitesimal, immeasurably mysterious, it is therefore unknown.
知我者希，則我者貴。希，少也。唯達道者乃能知我，故為貴也。
“Those who understand me are rare, and so, those few I treasure”
Rare, here, means few. Only those who arrive at Dao are able to understand me. For this reason, they are treasured.
是以聖人被褐懷玉。被褐者薄外，懷玉者厚內，匿寶藏德，不以示人也。
“It is for these reasons that the Sage wraps himself in coarse cloth while concealing jade in his heart”
Those who wear coarse cloth appear poor, externally. Those who conceal jade in their hearts have great wealth, internally. By hiding treasure, and concealing Virtue, they are not put on display for others.

SEVENTY

Studying, chanting, memorizing, theorizing, and sharing Lao Zi’s words is like filling one’s yard with bags of seed, fertilizer, garden tools, and sprinkler systems without ever planting a garden. Only by putting them into use can one build a garden, cultivate, transform, and truly gain any benefit from taking on this initiative.

~ 71 ~

To know that you do not know is best
Not knowing, but thinking you know, is illness
Only being sickened by their sickness
Does one not become ill
Sages are not ill because they are sickened by their sickness

Chapter 71
知病 Knowledge and Illness

知不知上，知道言不知，是乃德之上。
“To know that you do not know is best”
Those who know Dao say that they do not know, yet their Virtue is superior.
不知知病。不知道言知，是乃德之病。
“Not knowing, but thinking you know, is illness”
Those who do not know Dao, yet say that they know – their virtue is ill.
夫唯病病，是以不病。夫唯能病苦眾人有強知之病，是以不自病也。
“Only being sickened by their sickness does one not become ill.”[127]
Only if one can feel the suffering of this illness when everyone else feels powerful in their knowledge will they themselves not succumb to it.

聖人不病，以其病病，是以不病。聖人無此強知之病者，以其常苦眾人有此病，以此非人，故不自病。夫聖人懷通達之知，託於不知者，欲使天下質朴忠正，各守純性。小人不知道意，而妄行強知之事以自顯著，內傷精神，減壽消年也。
“Sages are not ill because they are sickened by their sickness.”
The Sage is without the illness of trying to appear clever. Because, ordinarily, people all suffer from this illness, he is not like other people – he does not suffer from this. For the Sage to be intelligent, he must allow knowledge to pass through him. This requires that he maintain a position of uncertainty.

Desiring that all under Heaven be plain in substance, loyal, and honourable, he protects the purity of their true nature (xing). Petty men do not know the Dao other than in their own minds, and so absurdly follow

their stubborn beliefs and act in ways that reveal their ignorance. Internally, this injures the spiritual vitality and decreases the lifespan by many years.

SEVENTY-ONE

It is better to think you may be wrong and find out you were right, than to think you're right and find out you were wrong.

Quite appropriately, this chapter leaves few translators without a degree of uncertainty as to the meaning of (literally) "so, only sick sick, therefore not sick. Sages not sick, therefore they sick sick." This might say "so, only (through being) sick of (this) sickness is one not sick. Sages are not sick; therefore, they (are certainly) sick of (this) sickness." Many words in Classical Chinese can be either nouns, verbs, adverbs, or adjectives depending on context. The repetition of a word can emphasize it or turn it into an adjective, and so *sick sick* could also mean *sickly*: "so, only the sickly are not ill" – only those who feel that they have this illness are not ill. This reading would suggest mindfulness, and an attitude similar to the common advice from Zen teachers on quiet sitting: the problem is not that thoughts [feelings, emotions, ignorance] arise; the problem is not being aware of thoughts [feelings, emotions, ignorance] when they arise.

~ 72 ~

When the people do not fear displays of power
Greater displays of power will follow
Let their homes not be disrespected
Let their lives not be tiresome
If they are not tiresome
They will not grow tired of them

Therefore the Sage knows himself
But does not display himself
Loves and cares for himself
But does not overestimate himself
He abandons that and chooses this

Chapter 72
愛己 Cherishing Oneself

民不畏威，則大威至。威，害也。人不畏小害則大害至。大害者，謂死亡也。畏之者當愛精神，承天順地也。
“When the people do not fear displays of power, greater displays of power will follow”
Displays of power, here, refer to injuries. When people do not fear small injuries, greater injuries follow. By greater injuries is meant “death and destruction.” Those who fear these things should cherish their spiritual vitality, receive from Heaven, and submit to Earth.
無狎其所居，謂心居神，當寬柔，不當急狹也。
“Let their homes not be disrespected”
This means that for the heart-mind to house the spirit, it is important to be broad and flexible, not urgent and tight.
無厭其所生，人所以生者，以有精神。託空虛，喜清靜，飲食不節，忽道念色，邪僻滿腹，為伐本厭神也。
“Let their lives not be tiresome”
Man’s place of life contains his spiritual vitality. When clear and empty, when enjoying clarity and tranquility, and when drink and food are not stagnating, revelations of Dao spontaneously come to mind. When filling

the belly with foul things, you effectively attack the root and exhaust the spirit.
夫唯不厭，是以不厭。夫唯獨不厭精神之人，洗心濯垢，恬泊無欲，則精神居之不厭也。
“If they are not tiresome, they will not grow tired of them.”
This refers to not exhausting people’s spiritual vitality. Cleanse the heart-mind, wash away the stains; anchor yourself in tranquility, and be without desires. Then spiritual vitality will not grow tired of its house.

是以聖人自知，不自見，自知己之得失，不自顯見德美於外，藏之於內。
“Therefore the Sage knows himself but does not display himself”
He knows himself and his inner gains and losses. He does not show his virtue and beauty externally, but conceals them within.
自愛不自貴。自愛其身以保精氣，不自貴高榮名於世。
“Loves and cares for himself but does not overestimate himself”
He cares for himself and his body by securing his vital energy-breaths.[128]
He neither appraises himself nor puts value on worldly glory and renown.
故去彼取此。去彼自見、自貴，取此自知、自愛
“Abandons that and chooses this”
He abandons displaying himself and overestimating himself while choosing to know himself and care for himself.

SEVENTY-TWO
To rule by force requires the continued application of force to maintain this rule. As Lao Zi explains, simply not overburdening the people will keep them from growing tired of this burden and striking back. The Sage rules with kindness and humility, imposing as little as possible while fostering vitality and harmony.

The opening line of chapter 72 may not refer to the ruler's power but to Dao's power. If we go against Dao by living an imbalanced lifestyle, we reject the balance of yin and yang in which we reside.

The latter part of this chapter suggests that one is endangered by putting themselves above the greater good, above righteousness. The saying "abandons that and chooses this" also appears in chapter 12 (containing the line “the five tones deafen the ears”) where it refers to choosing contentment over craving and seeking, being mindful that desires will lead us away from Dao and cause us to be met by its fierceness (see chapter 73). The second paragraph of chapter 72 is also complemented by chapter 13, which warns against looking to others for our self-acceptance.

Heshang Gong points out that just as the people will grow tired of a nation full of strife and anxiety – where they are presumably unable to safely roam, express themselves, or abide peacefully and happily – the inner spirits will tire of living in a body that is constantly oppressed by tension and anxiety, or polluted by unhealthy foods. Thus, the Sage does not allow his spirit and body to be depleted by the demands of seeking glory and renown. He takes what he has, and leaves unnecessary temptations. He cherishes spiritual vitality within and does not imperil it with a lifestyle that abuses his inner treasures.

~ 73 ~

Courage that is reckless brings death
Courage that is not reckless brings life
Of these two
One is useful, the other is harmful

Heaven's lurking ferocity
Who has ever known its extent?
Therefore the Sage also endures this circumstance

Heaven's Dao does not contend
Yet is excellent at overcoming
Does not speak
Yet is excellent at accomplishing what is necessary
Does not give summons
Yet is excellent at drawing towards itself
Remains uncontrived
Yet is excellent at organizing

Heaven's net is immense
It is loose
Yet loses nothing

Chapter 73
任為 Relying on Force

勇於敢則殺，勇敢有為，則殺其身。
"Courage that is reckless brings death"
Courage that is reckless is forceful – wei. This brings death to the body.
勇於不敢則活。勇於不敢有為，則活其身。
"Courage that is not reckless brings life"
Courage that is neither reckless, nor forceful, brings life to the body.[129]
此兩者，謂敢與不敢也。
"Of these two,"
Meaning not reckless, and reckless.
或利或害，活身為利，殺身為害。

“One is useful, the other is harmful”
Bringing life to the body is useful, bringing death to the body is harmful.

天之所惡。惡有為也。
“Heaven’s lurking ferocity”
This ferocity is forceful.
孰知其故？誰能知天意之故而不犯？
“Who has ever known its extent?”
Who can know Heaven’s plan and not disobey it?
是以聖人猶難之。言聖人之明德猶難於勇敢，況無聖人之德而欲行之乎？
“Therefore the Sage also endures this circumstance”
This means that the Sage’s enlightened virtue does not exempt him from difficulty were he to be recklessly courageous. Imagine then, being without the Sage’s virtue and wishing to act this way!

天之道，不爭而善勝，天不與人爭貴賤，而人自畏之。
“Heaven’s Dao does not contend yet is excellent at overcoming”
Heaven does not abide by men’s class struggles, yet men are naturally afraid of it.
不言而善應，天不言，萬物自動以應時。
“Does not speak yet is excellent at accomplishing what is necessary”
Heaven does not speak, yet all things naturally move in accord with its timing.
不召而自來，天不呼召，萬物皆負陰而向陽。
“Does not give summons yet is excellent at drawing towards itself”
Heaven does not shout commands, yet the myriad things all carry yin and follow yang.
繟然而善謀。繟，寬也。天道雖寬博，善謀慮人事，修善行惡，各蒙其報也。
“Remains uncontrived yet is excellent at organizing”
Chan(繟) means open-minded, and spontaneous. Heaven’s way, though it acts spontaneously and takes chances, is good at organizing. In looking after one’s own affairs, cultivate excellence and shun evil, for each will suffer their own fate.
天網恢恢，疏而不失。天所網羅恢恢甚大，雖疏遠，司察人善惡，無有所失。

“Heaven’s net is immense. It is loose, but loses nothing”
Heaven’s net, like those used for catching birds, is immense. Though loose and spanning a great distance, it is capable of noticing men’s goodness and wickedness, with no place going unnoticed.

SEVENTY-THREE

Understanding Lao Zi’s power and virtue of kindness, compassion, and love as applied to overcoming adversity,[130] we may better understand how “Heaven’s Dao does not contend, yet is excellent at overcoming; does not speak, yet is excellent at accomplishing what is necessary; does not give summons, yet is excellent at drawing towards itself; remains uncontrived, yet is excellent at organizing. Heaven’s net is immense. It is loose, yet loses nothing.” We can also better understand why “courage that is reckless brings death” by looking to chapter 67, in which he states, “if one neglects kindness in courage, they will die.”

~ 74 ~

If the people do not fear death
Of what use is threatening them with death?
By ordering that people stay under the constant threat of death
Those who are unusual
Will be seized and killed by their leaders
Who dares (to do such a thing)?

The Eternal is in charge of executions
To replace this executioner
This is called “making the cuts of a master craftsman”
When making these cuts in place of a master craftsman
It is incredibly rare that there is no injury
To one’s own hand

Chapter 74
制惑 A System in Confusion

民不畏死，治國者刑罰酷深，民不聊生，故不畏死也。治身者嗜欲傷神，貪財殺身，民不知畏之也。
“If the people do not fear death”
If those who rule a nation go too far in the severity of their punishments, the people will neither value life, nor fear death. If those who govern their bodies are weakened by desires, they will injure their spirit. Greed for wealth kills the body. People do not know to fear these things.
奈何以死懼之？人君不寬刑罰，教民去情欲，奈何設刑法以死懼之？
“Of what use is threatening them with death?”
If the rulers do not carefully consider punishments and penalties, nor teach the people to abandon their desires and strong emotions, how can the establishment of punishments and laws cause them to fear death?
若使民常畏死，當除己之所殘剋，教民去利欲也
“By ordering that people stay under the constant threat of death”
They should rid themselves of cruelty and domineering, and teach the people to abandon avarice.

而為奇者，吾得執而殺之。孰敢？以道教化而民不從，反為奇巧，乃應王法執而殺之，誰敢有犯者？老子疾時王不先道德化之，而先刑罰也。
“Those who are unusual will be seized and killed by their leaders. Who dares (to do such a thing)?”
Though Dao shows the way, people do not follow it. They practice unusual skills and then the king declares it a crime and executes them. Who dares to commit such a violation? It was troubling to Lao Zi that the kings of his day did not first reform themselves by Dao and Virtue before they started punishing and penalizing others.

常有司殺者。司殺者，謂天居高臨下，司察人過。天網恢恢，疏而不失也。
“The Eternal is in charge of executions“
What is in charge of executions is Heaven. It resides above, and descends to the bottom. It is in charge of examining people’s crimes. Heaven’s net is immense, loose, yet nothing is lost.
夫代司殺者，是謂代大匠斲。天道至明，司殺有常，猶春生夏長，秋收冬藏，斗杓運移，以節度行之。人君欲代殺之，是猶拙夫代大匠斲木，勞而無功也。
“To replace the executioner – this is called “making the cuts of a master craftsman”
Heaven’s Way is enlightened. In taking charge of killing, this is also the case. The same goes for sprouting in spring, growing in summer, harvesting in autumn, and storing in winter. The handle of the big dipper in the sky changes fortune as it moves, each section moving in precise measurement. When rulers desire to replace this in matters of killing, this is akin to a clumsy man trying to do the carving of a highly skilled craftsman and doing the work without any skill.
夫代大匠斲者，希有不傷手矣。人君行刑罰，猶拙夫代大匠斲，則方圓不得其理，還自傷。代天殺者，失紀綱，不得其紀綱還受其殃也。
“When making these cuts in place of a master craftsman, it is incredibly rare that there is no injury to one’s own hand”
When rulers take control of executions and punishments, it is akin to a clumsy man trying to do the carving of a highly skilled craftsman. In this case, the square and the round will not be true, and he will injure himself. Replacing Heaven in deciding on executions, one will miss the guidelines.

They will not obtain their objectives and, missing the guidelines, misfortune will fall on them as well.

SEVENTY-FOUR

Chapter 74 can be read as a warning against refusing to adapt to change. If one tries to eliminate all forces of change and reject the alternations of Dao, they only diminish their ability to influence change in the long run as they will be in a constant battle against the natural rebounds of yin and yang. In martial arts, a common phrase is “learning through loss” – learning how to defend by observing how our defenses were broken, gaining balance by experiencing imbalance. Rather than trying to deny failures, it is better to sit with those failures and observe them. As Heshang Gong states in chapter 54:

> To cultivate Dao in the body, observe what happens when one does not cultivate Dao in the body. To learn what causes the loss of life, learn what preserves life. To cultivate Dao in the home, observe what happens when Dao is not cultivated in the home…

~ 75 ~

The people are starving
Because those above them indulge in over-taxation
This causes starvation
The people are difficult to govern
Because those above them are meddlesome
This causes difficulty in governing

The people are careless towards death
Because they seek fullness of life
This causes carelessness towards death
So then, only those without regard for their lives
Will strive for fullness of life
Therein resides the virtue of valuing life

Chapter 75
貪損 The Consequences of Greed

民之饑，以其上食稅之多，是以飢。人民所以饑寒者，以其君上稅食下太多，民皆化上為貪，叛道違德，故饑。
“The people are starving because those above them indulge in over-taxation. This causes starvation.”
The people starve in the cold when rulers increase taxes until there is no longer enough food to go around. The people then become greedy, rebel against Dao, and disobey Virtue. This causes starvation.
民之難治，以其上之有為，是以難治。民之不可治者，以其君上多欲，好有為也。是以其民化上有為，情偽難治。
“The people are difficult to govern because those above them are meddlesome. This causes difficulty in governing.”
Rulers who perpetuate their many desires and wish to be in control, are unable to govern the people. The people, influenced by those above them, become false in their sentiments and difficult to govern.

民之輕死，以其上求生之厚，人民所以侵犯死者，以其求生活之道太厚，貪利以自危。

“The people are careless towards death because they seek fullness of life.”
The people will invade homes, rob, and murder, when they seek to live a lifestyle of excess. Their greed becomes a danger to themselves.
是以輕死。以求生太厚之故，輕入死地也。
“This causes carelessness towards death.”
By seeking a life of excess, people’s recklessness leads them into perilous traps.
夫為無以生為者，是賢於貴生。夫唯獨無以生為務者，爵祿不干於意，財利不入於身，天子不得臣，諸侯不得使，則賢於貴生也。
“So then, only those without regard for their lives will strive for fullness of life. Therein resides the virtue of valuing life.”
It is only the solitary man without concern for life who truly strives for life, and does not think about being blessed with rank and title. When valuables and favours do not take precedence over the concern for one’s own body and character, ministers will not try to overtake the emperor, and lords will not be betrayed by their messengers. This follows the virtue of valuing life.

SEVENTY-FIVE

Though Daoist philosophy is often thought to be apolitical, and a Daoist’s involvement in politics to be a breach of the Daoist way of life, this common view somehow misses the fact that the *Dao De Jing* is as much a political treatise as it is a manual for self-cultivation. As Heshang Gong points out in chapters 13 and 66, this political philosophy favours acting towards the citizens as a mother and father love their children: do not oppress them, do not abuse them, and do not punish them excessively. The ruling class should not live opulently at the expense of the people, for the poverty and competition created by this will only diminishes the people’s loyalties as they fight to survive amongst scarcity. Just as a ruler should not oppress its people, the body functions best when the heart-mind is not overactive and interfering, extending the above remediations to the internal power dynamics of the body.

As a political theory, this may say seem akin to libertarianism, though likely not the type of libertarian-capitalism found in neoliberalism, which affords corporations the liberty to dominate, tyrannize, and exploit, regardless of the effects this has on the societies and ecologies in which they operate. Lao Zi’s libertarianism appears to be something more akin to the cooperative libertarian-socialism of William Godwin (d. 1836), Charles Fourier (d. 1837), and Mikhail Bakunin (d. 1876), if not also the “social ecology” of Murray Bookchin (d. 2006). Evidence of this can be seen in chapter 80 where Lao Zi advocates small cooperative and voluntary (liberated) groups, similar to Fourier’s “phalanges” (see chapter 80). While very similar to anarchism, libertarian-socialism may also accept a degree of federalism and state, so long as state involvement is minimal and supportive, like the wu

wei approach to government that Lao Zi advocates for the emperor, as modeled on Dao and De (see chapter 51).

This lesson of minimizing taxes follows the cultivation of life in that if someone gorges themselves on delicacies or other pleasures, they do so at the expense of themselves. Even intense elation has a gradual weakening effect, much as any other extreme emotion. Thus, Lao Zi points out that the Dao of enjoying the pleasures of life lies in enjoying simple pleasures, where the pendulum does not swing so wide as to exhaust the person when it swings back the other way ("only those without regard for their lives will strive for fullness of life. Therein lies the virtue of valuing life."). Most of these hazardous activities involve excessive consumption, perhaps as a way to escape a sense of lack somewhere in one's life. Rather than focus on filling the senses, it would be better to fill one's life with whatever is missing – community, fulfilling employment, fulfillment of talents, exercise, outdoor activity, healthy eating, healthy environment, or perhaps simply self-confidence. Rather than tax your body, it's better to just, as James Brown said, "get up off'a that thing!"

~ 76 ~

When born, people are soft and pliant
At death, they become hard and inflexible
As with all things
When plants and trees begin to grow
They are flexible and pliant
Yet, when dying
They become dry and rotten
Thus, hardness and inflexibility are the approach of death
While softness and pliancy are the approach of life
Therefore armies that are rigid will not be victorious

When the tree is strong
It encompasses both (rigidity and suppleness)
The rigid and large reside at the bottom
While the soft and delicate reside at the top

Chapter 76
戒強 Admonishing Rigidity

人之生也柔弱，人生含和氣，抱精神。故柔弱也
“When born, people are soft and pliant”
When people are born, they are filled with a harmonious energy-breath. They embrace the spiritual vitality and are thus soft and pliant.
其死也堅強。人死和氣竭，精神亡，故堅強也。
“At death, they become hard and inflexible”
When people die, the harmonious energy-breath is exhausted and the spiritual vitality perishes, resulting in hardness and inflexibility.
萬物草木之生也柔脆，和氣存也。
“As with all things, when plants and trees begin to grow, they are flexible and pliant”
Their harmonious energy-breath remains.
其死也枯槁。和氣去也。
“Yet, when dying, they become dry and rotten”
Their harmonious energy-breath departs.

故堅強者死之徒，柔弱者生之徒。以上二事觀之，知堅強者死，柔弱者生也。
“Thus, hardness and inflexibility are the approach of death, while softness and pliancy are the approach of life”
These two functions can now be observed, knowing that hardness and inflexibility bring death, and that softness and pliancy bring life.
是以兵強則不勝，強大之兵輕戰樂殺，毒流怨結，眾弱為一強，故不勝。
“Therefore armies that are rigid will not be victorious”
Strong and large armies take war lightly and take pleasure in murder. This spreads like a poison and congeals the hatred of the formerly acquiescent masses, making them united and powerful. This does not lead to victory.

木強則共。本強大則枝葉共生其上。
“When the tree is strong, it encompasses both (rigidity and suppleness)”
When the roots are strong and large, branches and leaves will grow above them.
強大處下，柔弱處上。興物造功，大木處下，小物處上。天道抑強扶弱，自然之效。
“The rigid and large reside at the bottom, while the soft and delicate reside at the top”
By rising up, things develop their abilities. The large part of a tree resides at the bottom, while the small parts reside at the top. Heaven’s Dao presses down the strong, and lifts up the weak. This is the result of natural spontaneity (zi ran).

SEVENTY-SIX
Daoist and Shaolin martial arts train the body to become like a young tree, with limbs strong and flexible, circulating qi and blood like a well hydrated tree-branch coursing with sap, nearly unbreakable due to the flexibility and density of its fibres. Tendons are strengthened and power is condensed into the muscles (considered wood element/phase) so that even a seventy-year-old master can strike with the force of an iron bar and gracefully glide around his opponent like water flowing through a channel. While the martial applications of these arts are many, perhaps their greatest gift is the longevity they instill in teaching centeredness within chaos. If we can learn to naturally adapt, “learn to unlearn,” and not attach our past to our present experiences, we will defeat far more adversaries than in any external battles.

In consideration of the previous ten chapters' elucidation of resistance to change and the superior efficacy of love, compassion, and kindness for neutralizing conflict, we might read chapter 76 as admonishing rigid combativeness when faced with opposition. Like the roots and branches of a tree, we can remain centered and grounded while swaying with the winds of circumstance and environment, yielding to change without letting it uproot us. Much as a tree is a constant source of oxygen, being deeply rooted in Dao while natural and simply *as oneself* (zi ran) allows an interplay with the positive energy around us. "*When the tree is strong, it encompasses both (rigidity and suppleness). The rigid and large reside at the bottom; the soft and delicate reside at the top*."

~ 77 ~

The Way of Heaven
Is it not like the stretching of a bow?
What is high, it causes to be pulled low
What is low, it causes to be uplifted
What has excess, it causes to be diminished
What lacks sufficiency it causes to be restored

Heaven's Way diminishes what has excess
And restores what lacks sufficiency
The way of man, however, is not this way
Diminishing what suffers lack
And assisting where there is excess
Who can have in excess, and care for all under Heaven?
Only those who have Dao

Therefore, sages act but do not expect anything in return
They achieve their ends without lingering
And have no desire to exhibit inner worth

Chapter 77
天道 Heaven's Dao

天之道，其猶張弓與,天道暗昧，舉物類以為喻也。
"The Way of Heaven – is it not like the stretching of a bow?"
Heaven's Way is dark and obscure. Various categories of things are used to describe it metaphorically.
高者抑之，下者舉之，有餘者損之，不足者補之。言張弓和調之，如是乃可用耳，夫抑高舉下，損強益弱，天之道也。
"What is high, it causes to be pulled low. What is low, it causes to be uplifted. What has excess, it causes to be diminished. What lacks sufficiency it causes to be restored."
This describes the stretching of a bow and its harmonizing movement. The ears can also be attuned in the same way by pressing down what is high and

raising what is low. Impairing the powerful and assisting the gentle is Heaven's Way.
天之道，損有餘而補不足。天道損有餘而益謙，常以中和為上。
"Heaven's Way diminishes what has excess, and restores what lacks sufficiency"
By always upholding balance and harmony, Heaven's Way diminishes what has excess and benefits the humble.
人之道則不然，損不足以奉有餘。人道則與天道反，世俗之人損貧以奉富，奪弱以益強也。
"The way of man, however, is not this way – diminishing what suffers lack, and assisting where there is excess"
Man's way goes in the opposite direction of Heaven's way. Today it is customary to hinder the poor and serve the rich; to rob the weak and profit the strong.
孰能有餘以奉天下？唯有道者。言誰能居有餘之位，自省爵祿以奉天下不足者乎？唯有道之君能行也。
"Who can have in excess, and care for all under Heaven? Only those who have Dao"
Lao Zi asks "who can maintain their inner peace while in possession of the royal surplus?" Originally, during times of prosperity, the provincial lords would make donations to the population rather than satiating themselves. Only rulers who have Dao can practice this.

是以聖人為而不恃，聖人為德施，不恃其報也。
"Therefore, sages act but do not expect anything in return"
Sages act virtuously and generously, without requiring acknowledgement.
功成而不處，功成事就，不處其位。
"They achieve their ends without lingering"
They achieve what needs to be done without lingering in positions of authority.
其不欲見賢。不欲使人知己之賢，匿功不居榮，畏天損有餘也。
"And have no desire to exhibit inner worth"
They have no desire to make grand statements and have their worthiness known to others. Hiding their achievements, they do not bask in glory, fearing that Heaven will diminish what is excessive.

Chapter 77 also dismisses misinterpretations of chapter 75, which assert that Lao Zi advocated for an entirely non-intervening government. While Lao Zi does advocate for a leadership that is not over-meddling or burdensome to its people, he also advocates for leadership that facilitates balance and harmony in society by governing in accordance with "the Way of Heaven." If the ruler "has Dao," if they can recognize and appreciate sufficiency, they can abstain from excessive expenditures and use surplus to care for the people. This is simply the Way of Heaven and the Dao of virtuous government; as such, the Sage does not expect praise for acting accordingly.

Though internal meanings can be found in chapter 77, for example, the mixing of yin and yang, of Heavenly and Earthly essences, of the spiritual vitality of the heart and kidneys, and of spirit and qi, its overt and external (political/worldly) reference to social and economic balance is in no way negated by its internal meanings. Thus, this blatant social role of government should not be dismissed by looking only at these internal meanings. As chapter 65 explains, "when knowledge is used to govern the nation, this results in thievery from the nation. Not using knowledge to govern the nation blesses the nation."

~ 78 ~

In all under Heaven
Nothing is softer or more adaptable than water
Yet, for attacking that which is hard and strong
Nothing is more capable of victory
There is nothing which does so with such ease
Weakness overcomes strength
Softness overcomes rigidity
In all under Heaven, nothing is ignorant of this
Yet nothing puts it into practice
Therefore the Sage says:
Receiving (responsibility for) the state's foulness
For this, one is called Governor of the Province (Host of the Gods of Soil and Grain)
Receiving (responsibility for) the state's bad omens
For this, one is called Emperor of All Under Heaven
Though correct, such words seem reversed

Chapter 78
任信 Relying on Sincerity

天下莫柔弱於水，圓中則圓，方中則方，壅之則止，決之則行。
"In all under Heaven, nothing is softer or more adaptable than water"
When inside a circle it fits the circle. When inside a boat it fits the boat. When obstructed it halts; when the decision is made, it follows through.[131]
而攻堅強者莫之能勝，水能懷山襄陵，磨鐵消銅，莫能勝水而成功也。
"Yet, for attacking that which is hard and strong, nothing is more capable of victory"
Water is able to embrace a mountain, nourish a mound, wear down iron, and disintegrate copper. Nothing is more capable of victory than water when it comes to completing these tasks.
以其無以易之。夫攻堅強者，無以易於水。
"There is nothing which does so with such ease"
When attacking the hard and strong, nothing does this as easily as water.
弱之勝強，水能滅火，陰能消陽。

“Weakness overcomes strength”
Water can extinguish fire. Yin can disintegrate yang.
柔之勝剛，舌柔齒剛，齒先舌亡。
“Softness overcomes rigidity”
The tongue is soft and the teeth are hard, but the teeth die before the tongue.
天下莫不知，知柔弱者久長，剛強者折傷。
“In all under Heaven, nothing is ignorant of this”
All know that the soft and pliant endure a long time, while the hard and strong break and get injured.
莫能行。恥謙卑，好強梁。
“Yet nothing puts it into practice”
Ashamed of a humble position, they dream of being powerful and immovable.
是以聖人云：謂下事也。
“Therefore the Sage says:”
In reference to the following positions

受國之垢，是謂社稷主；人君能受國之垢濁者，若江海不逆小流，則能長保其社稷，為一國之君主也。
“Receiving (responsibility for) the state’s foulness – for this, one is called Governor of the Province (Host of the Gods of Soil and Grain)”
Rulers who can take on the foulness of a state are like large rivers and seas which do not reject the water from smaller channels. In this way, they can long protect the province and create one nation for the emperor.
受國不祥，是為天下王。人君能引過自與，代民受不祥之殃，則可以王天下。
“Receiving (responsibility for) the state’s bad omens – for this, one is called Emperor of All Under Heaven”
If a ruler can go beyond serving himself, and put himself in front of the people while dealing with disasters and bad omens, he may become emperor of all under Heaven.
正言若反。此乃正直之言，世人不知，以為反言
“Though correct, such words seem reversed”
These correct and proper words are unknown today, which causes the reverse to be spoken.

SEVENTY-EIGHT

Water is the most humble substance. It adapts to everything, never asserting its own will, and yet over time all things succumb to it. Like water, emperors and states should also adapt to the people and serve them. Though they have power, they are in fact the ultimate servants, ensuring the basic rights and needs of even the lowest beggar and criminal. Though water adapts, becoming solid in winter, evaporating in heat, and consolidating into rain, it never changes its basic nature and never refuses the myriad living things. It is the epitome of virtue and the epitome of love, kindness, and compassion.

~ 79 ~

When pacifying a great rivalry
Some hatred surely remains
How can this be considered excellent?
Therefore, the Sage holds the left side of the contract
And does not oblige the other party
Those with virtue take initiative in fulfilling the treaty
Those without virtue take initiative in mounting invasions
The way of Heaven has no partiality
It always serves to further excellence amongst people

Chapter 79
任契 Relying on Contracts

和大怨，殺人者死，傷人者刑，以相和報。
“When pacifying a great rivalry”
Those who murder people are killed and those who injure people are punished. (“Pacifying a great rivalry”) refers to bringing calm to these situations.
必有餘怨，任刑者失人情，必有餘怨及於良人也
“Some hatred surely remains”
Those who rely on punishments lose the faith of the people. Some hatred is then certain to remain and catch up even to the virtuous.
安可以為善？言一人，則先天心，安可以和怨為善？
“How can this be considered excellent?”
The words of this one man echo the original mind of Heaven. In the pursuit of peace, how can quiet hatred be considered excellent?
是以聖人執左契而不責於人。古者聖人執左契，合符信也。無文書法律，刻契合符以為信也。但刻契為信，不責人以他事也。
“Therefore, the Sage holds the left side of the contract, and does not oblige the other party”
In the past, when sages held the left side of the contract, this meant that they united the tally with honesty. They did not embellish the books, standards,

or laws, but tallied and inscribed the contract with honesty. They did not oblige the other party with new affairs.
有德司契，有德之君，司察契信而已。
“Those with virtue take initiative in fulfilling the treaty”
When an emperor is virtuous, initiative is taken to examine a contract, ensuring that it is fair and complete.
無德司徹。無德之君，背其契信，司人所失。
“Those without virtue take initiative in mounting invasions”
When an emperor is without virtue, he betrays the agreements of the contract, and forces people from their homes.
天道無親，常與善人。天道無有親疏，唯與善人，則與司契同也。
“The way of Heaven has no partiality. It always serves to further excellence amongst people.”
The way of Heaven does not have any familial loyalties. It only helps people of excellence. Therefore, those who take initiative in adhering to the contract will receive its assistance.

SEVENTY-NINE

In resolving a great dispute, some offenses are sure to go unaddressed, and so no great dispute can be fully resolved until these offenses can be disregarded.

Regarding self-cultivation, this chapter suggests learning to quiet that part of the mind that seeks every detail to be explained. The understanding offered by a bit more knowledge will not bring peace to the mind – the resolute intention to bring clarity to the mind is what will clear it of wandering thoughts and give rise to peacefulness. In the process of clearing the mind, many issues, items, and details will present themselves, and they must all be forgotten, much as the innumerable debts forgiven so as to resolve an old dispute.

~ 80 ~

(Rule the nation like) a small state with few people
Furnished with a file of ten equipped soldiers
But not employing them
(Where) its people respect the seriousness of death
And never migrate
Though having boats and carriages
They are without any reason to ride in them
Though having a military and weapons
There is no reason to display them

Have the people return to the simple notation system
Of knotting ropes
If their food is tasty
If their clothing is beautiful
If their homes are tranquil
And their customs are joyous
The neighbouring states could be close enough to see
Their chickens and dogs heard on each side
Yet the people will grow old and pass away
Without ever going to visit those places

Chapter 80
獨立 Standing Alone

小國寡民，聖人雖治大國，猶以為小，儉約不奢泰。民雖眾，猶若寡少，不敢勞之也。
“(Rule the nation like) a small state with few people”
The Sage rules the large nation as though it were small, and is minimalistic when drawing a constitution rather than extravagant with his authority. The people, though very many, are treated as though very few so that he does not dare over-exert them.
使有什伯之器而不用，使民各有部曲什伯，貴賤不相犯也。器謂農人之器。而不用，不徵召奪民良時也。
“Furnished with a file of ten equipped soldiers, but not employing them”

When every person has a family member in their local military, neither rich nor poor will commit crimes against each other. “Equipped” means equipped with farming tools. “Not employing them” means that the people are not drafted into the army during peace time.
使民重死而不遠徙。君能為民興利除害，各得其所，則民重死而貪生也。政令不煩則民安其業，故不遠遷徙離其常處也。
“(Where) its people respect the seriousness of death, and never migrate”
The Son of Heaven can influence the people to live an active lifestyle, to be skilful and effective, to remove dangers and obstacles, and to each obtain their place in the world. As a result, the people will respect the seriousness of death and have a powerful desire for life. Governmental decrees should not cause difficulty. Then the people will stabilize their professions and not migrate away to establish themselves somewhere else.
雖有舟輿，無所乘之；清靜無為，不作煩華，不好出入遊娛也。
“Though having boats and carriages, they are without any reason to ride in them”
Clear, tranquil, and effortless, they will not trouble themselves with gross luxuries, nor yearn to travel around for pleasure.
雖有甲兵，無所陳之。無怨惡於天下。
“Though having a military and weapons, there is no reason to display them”
There will be no hatred or evil in the world.

使民復結繩而用之，去文反質，信無欺也。
“Have the people return to the simple notation system of knotting ropes”
Leaving embellishments and returning to the basics, their words will be sincere and without deception.
甘其食，甘其蔬食，不漁食百姓也。
“If their food is tasty”
If they enjoy sweet vegetables, they will not seek food from others.
美其服，美其惡衣，不貴五色。安其居，安其茅茨，不好文飾之屋。
“If their clothing is beautiful”
If it is beautiful enough that they do not hate their clothes, they will not prize many-coloured garments.
安其居，安其茅茨，不好文飾之屋。
“If their homes are tranquil”
If they have tranquil straw thatched homes, they will not wish to adorn their rooms with decorations.

樂其俗。樂其質朴之俗，不轉移也。
“And their customs are joyous”
If they enjoy the basic substance of the customs, and do not alter them.
鄰國相望，雞犬之聲相聞，相去近也。
“The neighbouring states could be close enough to see, their chickens and dogs heard on each side”
Meaning that they are separated by very little distance.
民至老死不相往來。其無情欲。
“Yet the people will grow old and pass away without ever going to visit those places”
They will be free from desires and strong emotions.

EIGHTY

From an internal perspective, chapter 80 speaks to contentment during silent sitting – learning to find peace where one sits, without seeking distractions or external aids – simply finding peace with oneself and one’s place.

Taking Lao Zi’s recommendation for independent communities as a genuine goal, and seeking a reference point for Lao Zi’s political theories in those known in the Western world, it may help to look at the communities, similar to those proposed here by Lao Zi, which began to pop up in the mid-1800s under the influence of Charles Fourier. Fourier developed an early form of libertarian-socialism based on small cooperative and voluntary (liberated) groups called “phalanges” (phalanxes), as described in his *Theory of the Four Movements and the General Destinies* (1808).

> The phalange, in Fourier’s conception was to be a cooperative agricultural community bearing responsibility for the social welfare of the individual, characterized by continual shifting of roles among its members. He felt that phalanges would distribute wealth more equitably than under capitalism and that they could be introduced into any political system, including a monarchy.[132]

In contrast to later Marxist ideologies, Fourier also advocated:

> That every laborer be a partner, remunerated by dividends and not by wages. That every one, man, woman, or child, be remunerated in proportion to the three faculties, *capital, labor, and talent*.[133]

These “phalanges” were not entirely successful, however, lasting only a few years on average, perhaps because they did not adhere to Lao Zi’s oft repeated call to cultivate oneself by finding contentment in sufficiency and reducing desires. Likely in reaction to the institutionalized repression of his day, Fourier advocated libertine sexuality and a reawakening of passions that were violently suppressed in the Victorian era. Had he

learned and taught the tranquil transcendence of desires through Daoist self-cultivation, these phalanges may have attained greater longevity. As stated in chapter 37, “when the tranquility of desirelessness is established, all under heaven stabilizes itself.”

Similar to the work model of the “phalange” are co-op businesses where all who work in the business own an equal share of it, and duties may be more varied and dynamic. As the co-op business model continues to gain in popularity, Lao Zi’s advice will also benefit the longevity of these businesses as it reflects Fourier’s slightly more extravagant recommendation:

> That the workshops and husbandry offer the laborer the allurements of elegance and cleanliness… In order to attain happiness, it is necessary to introduce it [happiness] into the labors which engage the greater part of our lives. Life is a long torment to one who pursues occupations without attraction. Morality teaches us to love work: let it know, then, how to render work lovable, and, first of all, let it introduce luxury into, husbandry and the workshop. If the arrangements are poor, repulsive, how arouse industrial attraction?[134]

~ 81 ~

True words are not beautified
Beautified words are not true words
The skilled are not argumentative
The argumentative are not skilled
Those who (presume to) know do not remain open-minded
The open-minded do not (presume to) know

Sages do not hoard
Having helped others
Oneself gains more
Having given to others
Oneself continues to gain
The Dao of Heaven is effective
And does no harm
The Dao of the Sage is to actuate
And not oppose

Chapter 81
顯質 Appearance and Substance

信言不美，信者，如其實也。不美者，朴且質也
“True words are not beautified”
True words are like authentic treasures. “Not beautified” means that they are of true substance.
美言不信。美言者，滋美之華辭。不信者，飾偽多空虛也。
“Beautified words are not true words”
By “beautified words” is meant long winded and flowery speech. “Not true words” means that these ornate fabrications are just hollow and empty.
善者不辯，善者，以道修身也。不綵文也。
“The skilled are not argumentative”
“The skilled” refers to those who practice Dao and self-cultivation. They do not use dazzling rhetoric.
辯者不善。辯者，謂巧言也。不善者，舌致患也。山有玉，掘其山；水有珠，濁其淵；辯口多言，亡其身。

“The argumentative are not skilled”
“Argumentative” means skilled in debate. “Not skilled” means that their tongues bring worry and suffering. Mountains containing jade are excavated. Water containing jewels is turned into a muddy abyss. An argumentative mouth with many words destroys the body.
知者不博，知者，謂知道之士。不博者，守一元也。
“Those who (presume to) know do not remain open-minded”
“Knowledgeable” refers to the academic’s way of knowing. This is not open-minded. Embrace the origin of Oneness.
博者不知。博者，多見聞也。不知者，失要真也
“The open-minded do not (presume to) know”
“Open-minded” means seeing and hearing much. This is not “knowing,” (because knowledge) misses the vital truth.

聖人不積，聖人積德不積財，有德以教愚，有財以與貧也。
“Sages do not hoard”
Sages accumulate Virtue. They do not hoard material wealth. Having Virtue, they teach simplicity. Having material wealth, they give to the poor.
既以為人己愈有，既以為人施設德化，己愈有德
“Having helped others, oneself gains more”
Having helped others to develop and reform their virtue, one’s own virtue increases.
既以與人己愈多。既以財賄布施與人，而財益多，如日月之光，無有盡時。
“Having given to others, oneself continues to gain”
When valuables, money, and clothes, are freely given to others, their value and benefit is increased. Like the light of the sun and moon, (this value) is never exhausted.

天之道，利而不害；天生萬物，愛育之，令長大，無所傷害也。
“The Dao of Heaven is effective and does no harm”
Heaven gives life to the myriad things. It lovingly rears them to become long lived and fully grown; it has no intention to injure or kill them.
聖人之道，為而不爭。聖人法天所施為，化成事就，不與下爭功名，故能全其聖功也。
“The Dao of the Sage is to actuate and not oppose”

Sages follow Heaven's principle of generosity by putting it into action. They transform and perfect things as situations present themselves. They do not follow lowly competitions for merit or fame, and as a result are able to retain their wisdom and merits.

EIGHTY-ONE

Following chapter 80's description of autonomous villages, chapter 81's call for mutual aid reminds its readers that for communities and societies to thrive in Dao, a collective endeavour of mutual benefit must reach through to collective actions. As Peter Kropotkin explains in his *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*:

> [Darwin] pointed out how, in numberless animal societies, the struggle between separate individuals for the means of existence disappears, how *struggle* is replaced by *co-operation*, and how that substitution results in the development of intellectual and moral faculties which secure to the species the best conditions for survival. He intimated that in such cases the fittest are not the physically strongest, nor the cunningest, but those who learn to combine so as mutually to support each other, strong and weak alike, for the welfare of the community. "Those communities," he wrote, "which included the greatest number of the most sympathetic members would flourish best, and rear the greatest number of offspring" (2nd edit., p. 163) … we may safely say that mutual aid is as much a law of animal life as mutual struggle, but that, as a factor of evolution, it most probably has a far greater importance … together with the greatest amount of welfare and enjoyment of life for the individual, with the least waste of energy.[135]

In contrast to many traditions that base their teachings on the writings of a great teacher, there has never been any call for a Daoist fundamentalism – for an adherence to the strict letter of Lao Zi's teachings. Perhaps the simultaneously broad and terse nature of Lao Zi's teachings were a safeguard against the human susceptibility to complete reliance on authoritative validation. It would be difficult to form a fundamentalist checklist out of the *Dao De Jing*, but this last chapter would, nonetheless, come as a disappointment to any who tried, finding that these words should never be taken as the final word.

> Those who (presume to) know do not remain open-minded
> The open-minded do not (presume to) know

Life is constantly moving and revealing itself. To even pay attention, one must open their mind and accept into their limited observational capacity the changes that have occurred since their previous blink. As we move, so does our correlation with the world. This is difficult enough to fully take in, let alone the endlessly diverse experiences of others.

As the saying goes, “every story sounds true until you hear the other side.” Thus, it serves us to truly listen in an attempt to understand. At the very least, we can avoid causing others that most frustrating sense of not being heard, while finding out for ourselves how, as Lao Zi says, “Having given to others, oneself continues to gain.” If we can suspend any sense that we are better than others, that we are something special, keeping an open mind and an open heart, the acceptance, respect, and support that we offer those around us can fill our environment, and reward us with a peaceful and supportive social ecosystem.

Appendix

Reading Classical Chinese

The following is a condensed lesson in Classical Chinese, which will help those who are interested to follow along with the Chinese text while reading the translation. This may help to reveal additional, or personal, interpretations of the original texts.

By recognizing the most commonly used words in these texts, it will be easier to navigate through each line and determine how each character relates to the translation. The definitions given below are only those which appear most often.

Please note that Classical Chinese is to modern Mandarin what Latin is to Italian, and that learning it will help one to recognize Chinese characters, but cannot be used to communicate in Mandarin. For this reason, and to simplify the learning process, pinyin spelling has not been included below. As is usually the case for Classical Chinese texts, traditional script will be used.

Beginning, ending, and transition words

故 thus
是以 therefore
以 because of/by
則 transition word, similar to “thus”/then
使 transition word, similar to “thus”/then/send
乃 and then/brings about
而 and/yet/but
於 in/at/on/often indicates passive tense
夫 starts a new thought/“Now,..”
此 this/these
也 ends a thought
何 how/what/why/?

兮 exclamation! Oh!
言 words/(he or she) says/this is to say
謂 definition/(this) means/

Verbs, nouns, adjectives, etc.

有 You: is/has/possesses/being
為 Wei: make/do/be/force/action

不 is not/do not
無 Wu: is not/is without/non-being
未 not yet

無為 Wu wei: without action/without force/effortless
事 duties, affairs, position
能 can/able
可 can/may
不能 cannot
不可 cannot
若 is similar to/as though
如 similar to/to like/to want
同 united

治 govern
行 walk/practice
守 guard
化 transform/become
知 know/knowledge
聖 wisdom

欲 desire
愛 love/affection
生 life/give birth to/give rise to
用 use/useful
得 obtain/attain to
失 lose
復 return to
止 stop

其 pronoun/the/their
之 pronoun/it/them
我 I/me/my/our
身 body/self
自 self/themselves
己 self/their
所 place/pronoun/may designate proceeding word as a noun
皆 all
多 many
少 few
貴 valuable/to value or honour
惡 dislike/hate
善 good/excellent
不善 bad
上 high/above
下 low/below
大 great/large
小 small
是 correct/this
非 incorrect/false

内 internal/inside
外 external/outside

道 Dao: Dao/path/principles of the universe / method /doctrine
德 De: De/mystical force of Virtue in nature/virtues /character/integrity

明 luminous/enlightened
心 heart and mind
虛 Emptiness
常 always/eternal
名 name/fame
神 Shen: spirit/gods
氣 Qi/Chi: energy/air/breath
精 Jing: essences/bodily fluid /vital/pure
精神 Jing-Shen: spiritual vitality
長 longevity/long
自然 Zi ran: naturally/spontaneously

天 Heaven
地 Earth
天下 the world/all under heaven
人 people/others/humanity
民 the people/the commoners/citizens
聖人 Sages
國 the state/country
物 thing
萬物 the myriad things
百姓 the hundred family names/all people/all types of people/Note: this excluded all but the ruling and aristocratic classes until around 500BC, as

only these classes had clan names, 姓 xing, previous to this time.

Common sentence structures

Sentences are often created with an A=B structure, which can be accomplished by simply putting two thoughts or words next to each other. This is made more apparent when the end of a sentence is marked with 也 .

Example 1:
作，生也
“Arise, here, means they are born”
(“ 作 arise = 生 born”)

A simple subject-verb-object sentence will use few if any articles, and will often appear in sequences of four words at a time:

Example 2:
多言害身
“Speaking too many words does harm to oneself.”
(多 many 言 words/speak 害 harms 身 body/self)

A common fifth word might be 之 , which is sometimes used to connect adjectives that follow the object or subject to which they pertain. It functions similar to the word “of,” but with the adjective and object in the reverse order.

Example 3:
天地之間空虛
“The gate of Heaven and Earth is hollow and empty”
(天 Heaven 地 Earth 之 of 間 gate 空 hollow 虛 empty)

之 can also function as the pronoun “it”:

Example 4:

壅之則止
“When obstructed it halts”
(壅 Obstruct 之 it 則 then 止 stop)

Example 5:
得之若驚
“Winning is startling”
(得 Winning/gaining 之 it 若 is like 驚 startle)
失之若驚
“Losing is also startling”
(失 Losing 之 it 若 is like 驚 startle)

Example 5 shows that, while pronouns common to English might be left out of Classical Chinese phrases, Classical Chinese pronouns may occasionally be left out of English translations. Example 5 also shows the flexibility of certain words. Note that “ 若 similar” was used here to say “also.”

A common exception to the subject-verb-object structure, however, is when 者 appears after a description to say “those who/that which,” or “as for.”

Example 6:
治身者
“Those who govern the body”
治國者
“Those who govern the state”
(治 govern 國 state 者 those who)

Example 7:
自勝者強
“Those who overpower themselves are powerful”
自 self 勝 overpower 者 those who 強 powerful

When reading the commentary which follows a phrase, the reiteration of terms and ideas will usually make it easier to determine which characters correspond to the words in the translation.

Example 8a (from chapter 34):
大道氾兮，言道氾氾，若浮若沉，若有若無，視之不見，說之難殊。
“Oh how the Great Dao is overflowing”
The Dao is flooding, overflowing, covering, submerging. As though present, as though absent. It cannot be seen through observation. To describe it is unusually difficult.

The phrase “*Oh how the Great Dao is overflowing*” begins with two easily recognizable words –“ 大 great” and “ 道 Dao.” From the list above, you will recognize “ 兮 exclamation!/oh!” so the remaining character of the sentence is revealed to mean “ 氾 *overflowing*” by following along with the translation.

The first character in the commentary is “ 言 this says” (see “beginning, ending, and transition words” above) which is implied, but omitted from the translation in this case. Then, as is common, some of Lao Zi’s words are repeated. See how “ 氾 overflowing” is repeated twice to say “very overflowing.” This device may also be used to turn a verb into an adjective. In this case, two definitions of 氾 fan were used to translate it.

There may be some confusion about the order of the remaining 16 characters; however, by recognizing “ 若 *as though,*” the words following this character can be ascertained. “ 有 is/being” and “ 無 without/non-being” can also be located in “*present and absent*.” Looking at the translation again, “*The Dao is flooding, overflowing, covering, submerging,*” it can be determined that 若 ruo was left out of the translation to avoid redundancy.

“*It cannot be seen through observation*” can be located in the line by finding “ 不 not” in “ 不見 *not seen*.” Then the rest of the sentence may begin to appear as “ 視 Observing 之 it 不 not 見 seen.”

The characters for “*To describe it is unusually difficult*” can be determined by finding “ 之 it,” and seeing that the verb (*describe*) before this object (*it*) was“ 說 describe” (see example 8, again).

Now, knowing which character means “*difficult*,” and which means “*unusual*” might escape you (especially since they appear in the reverse order in English), but the objective at this point is to simply match the translation, phrase by phrase, and get a vague idea of how it was originally worded. As you do this, and your vocabulary expands, more characters will be recognized.

The next line reads:
Example 8b:
其可左右。道可左可右，無所不宜。
“It can go both left and right”
Dao can be on both the left and the right. It has no place that is out of place.

Recognizing the pronoun, 其 , and the verb “ 可 can,” it is understood that 左 and 右 mean “ 左 *left and* 右 *right*.” Now these characters can be found in the commentary to determine how it says “*Dao can be on both the left and the right. It has no place that is out of place*.”

The first sentence should be easily discernable at this point. Now, knowing that 無 wu means “*without*,” it can be determined that 所 means “*place*.” The last word may be difficult to define, but there is enough information in the translation to determine that it means something along the lines of “ 宜 suitable.”

While this is a very brief lesson in Classical Chinese, it should give those who are new to it a few tools with which to get started, eventually helping

them to read the ancient masters' teachings in the same words through which they were transmitted.

Brief Pinyin Prounciation Guide

Lao : sounds like loud without the D
Zi: sounds like the su in supper but with a dz sound – dzu(pper)
Lao Zi: sounds like Louds-a / Loudz-uh
Dao: sounds like the beginning of tower with a D instead of T
De: sounds like the pronunciation of Zi described above, but with a D instead of Z
Xing: sounds like shing. The sound for X may be found by placing the tongue to make an S sound but then making a SH sound with the middle of the tongue closer to the roof of the mouth
Qi: sounds like chee
Zhuang: sounds like Jwong
Zhou: sounds like Jo, ending like show.
Liu: sounds like Leeyo
Lui: sounds like Lway
Di: sounds like Dee
Li: sounds like Lee
Yi: sounds like a Yee

Straw-Dogs and Benevolence in Chapter Five of the Dao De Jing

For approximately 2000 years, scholars have been rather uncertain, and troubled, about the meaning of the opening lines in chapter five of the *Dao De Jing*. Following its most common understanding, these lines are translated:

> 天地不仁 , 以萬物為芻狗
> Heaven and Earth are not benevolent
> They treat the myriad things as grass-dogs
> 聖人不仁 , 以百姓為芻狗
> The Sage is not benevolent
> He treats the hundred clans (all people) as grass-dogs

Given the phrase, “the Sage is not benevolent,” it appears that the next statement, “he treats the hundred clans as grass(-)dogs,” describes this inhumanity. What makes these lines difficult to accept, however, is that the way of the Daoist Sage, as described in any other chapter of the *Dao De Jing*, is quite to the contrary of this statement. Reading most any other chapter in this text, one sees that the Daoist Sage’s role in the world is to bring harmony and fulfillment to all under Heaven.

Adding to the immediate impression of this phrase, are some apparently similar phrases in Confucian texts. In the *Book of History*’s “*Book of Zhou*” (Jun-Chen, in *Zhou Shu*, in *Shan Shu*), one finds:

> “[King Wu said] 'Formerly, the duke of Zhou acted as teacher and guardian of the myriads of the people, who cherish (the remembrance of) his virtue. Go and with sedulous care enter upon his charge; act in accordance with his regular ways, and exert yourself to illustrate his lessons; so shall the people be regulated. I have heard that he said, "Perfect government has a piercing

fragrance, and influences the spiritual intelligences. It is not the millet which has the piercing fragrance; it is bright virtue." Do make this lesson of the duke of Zhou your rule, being diligent from day to day, and not presuming to indulge in luxurious ease. Ordinary men, while they have not yet seen a Sage, (are full of desire) as if they should never get a sight of him; and after they have seen him, they are still unable to follow him. Be cautioned by this! **You are the wind; the inferior people** (下民) **are the grass** (草). In revolving the plans of your government, never hesitate to acknowledge the difficulty of the subject. Some things have to be abolished, and some new things to be enacted going out and coming in, seek the judgment of your people about them, and, when there is a general agreement, exert your own powers of reflection." (trans. Legge)

In *Analects* 12:19, a somewhat milder use of this metaphor is found:

> 季康子問政於孔子曰：如殺無道，以就有道，何如？孔子對曰：子為政，焉用殺？子欲善，而民善矣。君子之德風，小人之德草。草上之風，必偃
> "Ji Kang asked Confucius about government, saying, "What do you say to killing the unprincipled for the good of the principled?" Confucius replied, "Sir, in carrying on your government, why should you use killing at all? Let your evinced desires be for what is good, and the people will be good. The relation between superiors and inferiors is like that between the wind and the grass (草). [literally: "the superior man's virtue is the wind, and the inferior man's virtue is the grass"]. The grass must bend, when the wind blows across it." (trans. Legge)

The third and fourth lines of chapter five in the *Dao De Jing* are generally understood to say: "The Sage is not benevolent; he treats the hundred clans as (sacrificial) grass-dogs." This interpretation appears to be supported by a story from chapter 14 of the *Zhuang Zi*, in which music-master Jin is asked about Confucius' practices. Jin responds that they are akin to ceremonial straw-dogs, which are treated with utmost reverence, and then destroyed after they have been offered. Jin then continues to

explain his meaning by saying: "If you take a boat which can move on water, and try to push it on land, it will never get you anywhere… To seek now to practice the ancient precepts of Zhou, in the state of Lu, will get you no further than a boat on land."

This shows that the purpose of Zhuang Zi's straw-dogs story was to say that things may be of use in some situations, but only a hindrance in others. Perhaps most revealing, is that the precepts from ancient Zhou, taught later by Confucius and considered by Zhuang Zi to be but fabricated, intentional, and willful enactments of benevolence and righteousness, are what Jin depicts as the worthless "straw-dogs."

Worthy of consideration, in understanding chapter five, is that Lao Zi specifies " 百姓 the hundred clans" rather than simply " 民 the common people." Until approximately 500BC, only people in the ruling and aristocratic classes held one of "the hundred family names." Thus, it should be noted that the statement in question was not advocating a tyrannical elitism, as it referred to all levels of society. Treating "the hundred clans" this way may, therefore, also suggest equality and justice throughout society, and that, like blades of grass, or dogs, all people simply have an equal place in the Oneness of all things.

Humanity is generally seen in Daoism to be above the rest of the myriad things, with the Emperor and sages bringing about their unification. However, Daoism also recognizes the interconnectivity of all things. While humans see themselves as most important, this self-mindedness is considered an illusion. Grass and straw grow on the earth, and mindlessly serve the biosphere, just as Dao and De nurture life without any intention or thought of doing so. Dao's actions are exemplified by De, Virtue, which can be seen throughout the text to be inalterably selfless and nurturing towards all of the myriad things. The Sage knows that he is a part of nature, and is not ostentatious, or resentful, for he knows that this is what it means to be alive. His intrinsic nature is not the same as that of grass and straw, but his function as part of the Dao is no different.

While the image of grass may seem to suggest lowliness, and unimportance, it should be noted that the perennial quality of many grasses has made it somewhat of a universal symbol of immortality. It was this quality that made wheat a symbol of the immortality of Osiris in ancient Egypt. The 4th c. BC Chinese book of mythology, the Shanghaijing, tells a

story of the three legged "Sun Crows," also found on Neolithic pottery and imperial robes, feasting on grasses of immortality. Chapter 16 of the *Dao De Jing* also refers to perennials with similar imagery:

Myriad creatures arise together
I thereby observe them return
So many things blossoming
And each returns back to its roots
Returning to the roots is called silence
This means returning to one's destiny-life-force (ming)
Returning to one's destiny-life-force is called eternality
Understanding eternality is called enlightenment

What is generally evoked to explain the discrepancy between the statement "Sages are not benevolent," and the Sage's obvious concern for the wellbeing of others, exhibited throughout the *Dao De Jing*, is Lao Zi's treatment of "benevolence" elsewhere in the text. "Ren," translated here as "benevolence," carries with it a cumbersome degree of cultural context and influence, especially when linked to Confucian ideals of propriety, which are not associated with its English equivalent. Lao Zi explains that ren requires intention, even fabrication, and arises only when true harmony has been lost; thus, it was not the ideal but rather a sign that Dao had been strayed from. In chapter 18, this is illustrated as follows:

When the Great Dao is abandoned
Benevolence and righteousness appear
When learnedness and intelligence are brought forth
Great deceit appears
When the six family relations are out of harmony
Filial piety appears
When the nation is on the eve of chaos
Loyal ministers appear

According to Lao Zi's view of benevolence in chapter 38, even "highest benevolence" takes willful action, as opposed to "Highest Virtue" which takes no action:

Highest Virtue is without action
It does not exist by its actions

Lower virtue takes action
It exists because of its actions
Highest benevolence takes action
Yet does not exist by its actions

Wu wei, translated as non-action, effortlessness, or no wilful action, is held as the ultimate strategy, virtue, power, and necessity for bringing harmony to all under Heaven. Proof of this efficacy is found in the wu wei of Dao, De, and Heaven, all of which bring about positive transformations without taking action. Heaven, synonymous with nature, takes no wilful action, but spontaneously follows Dao; thus, Heaven cannot be benevolent, since even "highest benevolence" takes action. This purview of ren (benevolence) is reflected in Zhuang Zi's story of music-master Jin, and his relegation of ren to so many other limited forms, all to be transcended by those who walk the Great Path. To paraphrase the greatest masters of most every art: when the form is mastered, it is forgotten.

Heshang Gong explains the fourth line of chapter five with his comment:

> Sages see the hundred clans as they see grass and straw for dogs and farm animals. They do not value people with any expectation of reciprocal courtesy in their minds.

Straw ("for farm animals"), 草 , is the character used to describe the grasses sought out by nomadic herdsmen. So, Heshang Gong appears to suggest that "grass-dogs" was meant as grass "for" dogs. Dogs are omnivorous and often eat various types of grasses as an abundantly available filler and source of fibre and nutrients. Enjoying it too much, some dogs eat grass too quickly and vomit it up, resulting in the common belief that they only eat grass to induce vomiting. This is not the case, however. Wild dogs will even eat the stomach contents of grass eating prey before anything else. The fact of the matter is that dogs have nearly the same affinity for eating grass as herbivorous animals. Given that few domesticated dogs now eat more than their owners give them, this formerly obvious connection between grass and dogs has been widely ignored.

So then, what does it mean that sages treat the hundred clans as grass *for* dogs?

If the preceding chapters are any indication, "grass for dogs" may suggest that the Sage does not act benevolently, but simply allows the hundred clans to roam and take care of themselves, knowing that they will find what they need, just as roaming dogs will find their own grass to fill up on. He lets the dogs be dogs, and the grass be grass. If so, this would create an image of the same idea, presented in chapters two and three:

> **2**
> **When the whole world knows the pleasing to be pleasing**
> **This ends in despising**
> **When all know the good to be good**
> **In the end there is "not good"**
> **[…]**
> **Therefore, sages handle affairs with non-action**
> **They practice wordless instruction**
> **And the myriad things all take their places**
> **Without responding**
> **Given life, but not possessed**
> **Acted for, but not expected of**
> **Perfection is cultivated, and not dwelled upon**
> **Surely, what is not dwelled upon**
> **Does not leave**
>
> **3**
> **Do not exalt the worthy**
> **And the people will not fight**
> **Do not praise goods which are difficult to obtain**
> **And the people will not steal**
> **[…]**
> **Act by not acting**
> **And everything will fall into place**

Chapter four does not continue with this idea, but reflects the latter part of chapter five:

> **4**
> **Dao is a container**
> **Though used again and again**
> **It is never full**
> **[…]**

5
[…]
The gate of Heaven and Earth
Is it not like a bagpipe?
Empty yet not finished.
It moves, and again more is pushed forth
[..]

These impressions of wu wei might carry into one's reading of chapter five, and likely informed Wang Bi's (226-249 AD) commentary on its opening lines. Wang Bi begins this commentary by saying:

> 天地不仁，以万物为刍狗：天地任自然，无为无造，万物自相治理，故不仁也。
> "*Heaven and Earth are not benevolent*."
> Heaven and Earth are zi ran (natural, not wilful). They are without action, and without endeavour. The myriad things are all governed together and managed in the same way. Thus, (Heaven and Earth) are not benevolent.
> 仁者必造立施化，有恩有为。造立施化，则物失其真；有恩有为，则物不具存。物不具存，则不足以备载矣。
> As for benevolence, it endeavours to establish reformation through kindness and wilful action. Endeavouring to establish reform, things lose their genuineness. Being obviously kind, and acting wilfully, these actions are not genuine. If things are not genuine, then there is no use in preparing them and carrying them about.
> 天地不为兽生刍，而兽食刍；不为人生狗，而人食狗。无为于万物而万物各适其所用， 则莫不赡矣。若慧由己树，未足任也。
> Heaven and Earth do not make animals grow grass, yet they eat the grass. They do not make people grow dogs, yet they eat dogs. (Heaven and Earth) are without willful action towards the myriad things, yet the myriad things each develop their appropriate uses, and there is nothing which is not provided for. It seems self-evident from this that things will establish themselves, even if they have not yet reached self reliance.

Wang Bi shows that Heaven and Earth do not act willfully, yet the myriad things all find their places and are provided for. As Heshang Gong often notes, when the Sage's virtue is abundant, the people are naturally reformed without any interference from the Sage.

This recurring concept of non-interference, in fact, takes us back to Zhuang Zi's story of music-master Jin, and the sacrificial offering of grass-dogs. When these effigies are prepared, Jin relates,

> "Before the grass-dogs are set forth (at the sacrifice), they are deposited in a box or basket, and wrapt up with elegantly embroidered cloths, while the representative of the dead and the officer of prayer prepare themselves by fasting to present them" (trans. Legge).

Note that those who handle the grass-dogs purify themselves before touching them; they keep them in a box, wrapped in expensive cloth, and treat them with the utmost care and delicacy. This degree of delicacy, and the care taken not to pollute these vessels, is also represented in chapter 60 of the *Dao De Jing*, which is elucidated in Heshang Gong's commentary:

> "*Govern a large state as though boiling a small fish*"
> When boiling a fresh fish, the intestines are not removed, the scales are not removed, and you shouldn't dare touch it, for fear that it will become mashed (and thus contaminated). Governing the state with vexation brings chaos to those below. Governing the body with vexation causes the spiritual vitality to scatter.

Chapter 60 goes on to explain that a ruler must handle the state with such care, so that its people will not be polluted by noxious entities. This is reminiscent of officers of prayer, who must purify themselves before handling the grass-dogs to ensure that they do not contaminate these vessels with unwanted energies.

> **Govern a large state as though boiling a small fish**
> **When Dao reaches all under Heaven**

Ghosts will not take over the spirit
It is not that ghosts will not take over the spirit
But that the spirit will not injure the person
It is not that the spirit will not injure the person
But that the Sage also will not injure people
So both of them will not bring injury
Thus, Virtue will intermingle and return

Was it this same care and delicacy, in the image of boiling a small fish, that was being suggested in the phrase "the Sage treats the hundred clans like grass-dogs?" If we are to understand this phrase in the context of the chapters leading up to it, and keep in mind the overall role of the Sage, which is to enable Virtue to enter and transform the myriad things so that they may be perfected and the world made harmonious, this would appear the most appropriate context in which to read this metaphor. Echoes of this delicate approach resound throughout the *Dao De Jing*, while the importance of purifying oneself to bring Virtue into the world, without disturbing, agitating, or interfering, is made abundantly clear throughout Heshang Gong's commentary.

Some of the most obvious examples of this are in the following excerpts, excluding those presented above:

29
The wish to possess all under Heaven
And control it
I see this has no end

The world is an instrument of the gods
It cannot be controlled
Those who try, spoil it
Those who grasp, lose

34
It accomplishes its work
Yet makes no name for itself
It loves and raises the myriad things
Yet does not act as their master
(note: Heshang Gong replaced "yi/cover" with "ai/love" in this stanza)

48

Conquering all under Heaven
Is best done without the endeavour to do so
Perpetually, this endeavour will continue
Without satisfaction
Even when all under Heaven is conquered

57
When taboos are abundant in the world
The people are extremely poor
When the people have an abundance of sharp weapons
The nation grows dark
When people have an abundance of skill and ingenuity
Irregular things flourish
When standards are increasingly publicized
Thieves and robbers abound

And from Heshang Gong's commentary:

37
"*When lords and kings can guard this within, the myriad things eventually transform themselves*"
When lords and kings can hold on to Dao, the myriad things progress and transform themselves by their own power.
"*Transforming yet desiring to do so intentionally, I pacify this desire with the simplicity of the nameless*"
"I," here, means within his body. Dao and Virtue are invisible in their unaltered simplicity. The myriad things transform themselves by their own power. When the desire to interfere through skillful artifice returns, lords and kings should pacify and soothe it with Dao and Virtue.
"*The simplicity of the nameless removes all desires. When the tranquility of desirelessness is established*"
When lords and kings pacify and soothe (the desire to interfere) with Dao and Virtue, the people also stop desiring. Thus, clarity and tranquility must guide their transformation.
"*The world stabilizes of itself*"
Those who can be like this, help the world to align and stabilize itself.

By purifying themselves, officers of prayer allowed the grass-dogs to be purified, and not polluted, by those presenting them. These offerings would become worthy of gods, while being handled immaculately by those worthy of doing so. In the same way, the Sage helps people to return to their intrinsic nature (xing) by purifying themselves of desire, including any desires to control this transformation.

Heshang Gong also makes a clear statement in this regard, in chapter 74:

> It was troubling to Lao Zi that the kings of his day did not first reform themselves by Dao and Virtue, before they started punishing and penalizing others.

In the same way that the officers of prayer must treat the straw effigies immaculately, the Sage must avoid filling the people's minds with too many ideas about good and bad, or the need to be praiseworthy and not disgraceful (see chapter two). Thereby, the people may remain "empty" and become pure, just as the purity of straw offerings allows them to naturally accumulate pure energy, and be worthy of gods. As Heshang Gong explains in chapter 42:

> "*(The myriad things) are infused with energy-breath, and made to be harmonious*"
> Inside of all things is the original energy-breath (yuan qi), attainted to through harmony and softness. If it is concealed in the breast, it will also be within the bone marrow, just as it is in plants and trees, in the empty hollows where energy-breath circulates. Thereby, (all things) obtain long life.

Letting the people be allows them to revert to harmony and softness, and not become rigid and tense while trying to resist the force of willful manipulation. As Heshang Gong explains in chapter 67, "there is no way to resist what does not use any force." This softness and pliancy is crucial to the cultivation of life, according to Lao Zi, while the willful intentions of benevolence are not a true reflection of the Highest Virtue, for the Highest Virtue "unites Heaven and Earth. Its harmonious energy-breath flows and circulates, refining Virtue in the people" (Heshang Gong, chapter 38).

A similar treatment to that of the straw dogs can be found in practices of Daoist and folk herbalism, where prayers and intentions will be infused into the medicine. When the medicinal properties have been absorbed, the dregs will be thrown onto the road “thus symbolically casting the disease out of the house, there to be crushed by the wheels of passing buses and trucks.”[136] The end treatment of the medicine is, of course, not the ultimate reflection of how these herbs are used. Prayers and intentions are infused into the medicine in hopes that they will bring peace and harmony to the patient, much as the prayers and intentions infused into the straw dogs were believed to foster peace and harmony in Heaven, and consequently on Earth and amongst Humanity. We may take from this that the Sage, therefore, does not simply tell people how to act and how to care for those closest to him, but puts his best attention and intention to all people, as though they were the mediums through which he would communicate his love and reverence for De and Dao.

Dan G. Reid taught himself how to read Classical Chinese with the help of textbooks, online tools, and internet forums. His self-published work has been acclaimed by notable translators and scholars such as Red Pine, Dr. Michael Saso, Daniel P. Reid (no relation), Daoist Abbot Michael Rinaldini, and Wudang Daoist meditation teacher Hu Xuezhi. Dan also studies and practices sitting meditation, Qigong, internal martial arts (Xingyi, Baguazhang, Taji Chuan), and is a multi-instrumentalist and poet. In 2018, Dan began studying Chinese physiotherapy, herbalism, moxibustion, and massage (Tui Na) to become a Registered Massage Therapist using ancient Chinese modalities, allowing him to apply and further his studies in Classical Chinese Medicine.

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(co-editor)
Hu Xuezhi, translation, annotation and commentary. *Discourse on Chuang Tzu: Expounding on the Dream of a Butterfly, Volumes I & II*. Calgary: ChuangChou Classics Press, 2016.

From the back-cover description for The Thread of Dao:

"… Modern scholars now believe that four texts, found in the ancient *Guan Zi* encyclopedia, are likely to have predated the completion of the *Dao De Jing*. These texts, *Purifying the Heart-Mind (Bai Xin)*, *Art of the Heart-Mind (Xin Shu I&II)*, and *Internal Cultivation (Nei Ye)*, provide exceptionally direct explanations of Daoist spiritual, mental, and energetic cultivation, making them invaluable keys to the teachings of early Daoist masters. *The Thread of Dao* translates and explores these texts alongside comparable teachings in the *Dao De Jing* and other Daoist, Buddhist, Confucian, and traditional Chinese medical sources, tracing their origins to a common thread of wisdom."

Amazon reviews are greatly appreciated!

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[1] Shang 上 being an early form of "anshang, 岸上 , bank/shore"

[2] Komjathy, Luis. *The Way of Complete Perfection: A Quanzhen Daoist Anthology*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013.

[3] Komjathy, Luis. *The Way of Complete Perfection: A Quanzhen Daoist Anthology*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013. p. 88

[4] See Cleary's "Sex, Health, and Long Life," a translation of texts attributed to the Yellow Emperor, found in the Mawangdui tombs, the contents of which are dated to approximately 200 BC

[5] See chapter 22

Note: Stretching exercises from the Han Dynasty are preserved in the silk Daoyintu painting (c. 168 BC), the reconstruction of which provides illustrations of 44 stretching postures. These postures appear to have been dynamic movements synchronized with the breath, as some of them resemble movements common to many qigong (also spelled chi kung) styles. Similar exercises, called the Five Animal Frolics, were also developed near the end of the first century AD by the celebrated doctor, Hua Tuo. With an emphasis on toning internal organs, these exercises are also also qigong practices.

[6] The *Guan Zi* is a compilation of political and philosophical treatise, some of which are attributed to the 7th century BC Prime Minister Guan Zhong, while others have been attributed to the Jixia Academy. The Jixia Academy was a center of learning, and debates, between the 100 Schools of Thought around the 3rd century BC, during the lifetimes of Zhuang Zi (370-287BC) and Mencius (372-289BC).

[7] Liu An (d. 122 BC) was a grandson of the founding Emperor of the Han Dynasty, Liu Bang. At 16 years old, he became "Prince of Huainan."

[8] Lit. "The Masters of Huainan"

[9] Liu Xiang's son, Liu Xin, also followed in this tradition of scholarship, by starting the Old Texts school of Confucianism.

[10] See, especially, chapter six, and the footnote in chapter five.

[11] Excerpt from *Tai Yi Sheng Shui* (anonymous) translated by Dan G. Reid

[12] While examples of these topics appear throughout the text, they are most apparent in chapters 61 to 81.

[13] See chapter 61

[14] Inherited by Buddhism from the Hindu tradition, they include the 8 octagonal directions (north, northeast, etc.), plus above and below

[15] Eight octagonal directions

[16] The northern, southern, eastern, and western directions of the earth. This may also refer to the same four directions as they divide the moon's path through "28 celestial mansions/constellation."

[17] north, south, east, west, above, and below, not limited to the earth

[18] Alan Chan's "Two Visions of the Way," which compares excerpts and concepts from the Wang Bi and Heshang Gong commentaries, describes disputes as to the authorship of this story. Based on the information provided by Chan, these disputes rely on the strong likelihood that the received version of Ge Xuan's story developed out of a similar story which appears in "Lives of Immortals," written by his grandnephew, Ge Hong. While this appears to be the case, given Ge Hong's close affiliation and scholarship with his granduncle, it would also appear likely that Ge Xuan taught Ge Hong this "history."

[19] Most descriptions of the Sage seem to suggest an existing culture; however, more explicit mention of ancient or traditional sayings can be found in chapters 15, 22, 41, 50, 57, 62, and 78.

[20] Chapters 10, 21, 23, 28, 51, 55, 60, and 65

[21] Chapters 41, 54, 59, and 63 (in Guodian text) plus 27, 38, 49, 68, 73, and 79 (not in Guodian text)

[22] The earlier Mawangdui copies have the Dao volume following the De volume. Thus, chapter one proceeded from chapter 81's "True words are not beautified…"

[23] See in the introduction "Dao, De, and Oneness in Heshang Gong's Commentary" for an explanation of how Heshang Gong equates De and Oneness.

[24] Dr. Saso, Michael. "Master Zhuang". Filmed circa 1970. YouTube video, 6m47sec. Posted April 10, 2010. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qsp33JiO6D8&feature=youtu.be.

In giving me permission to quote the above video, Dr. Saso asked that I note:

This video is a representation of the Zhengyi Orthodox Daoist tradition. Grade Five and above ordination, Grade Two Qing Wei Wu-Wei and Grade Three Beidou registers are also a part of the tradition. See the ordination manual of the Longhu Shan Celestial Masters for verification.

[25] The five spirits are discussed in chapter six

[26] Intent (yi) can be understood as the central cohesive force of the mind that allows for focus. This is also maintained in the correlation of intent with the central and unifying earth

element of the spleen. For Guan Zi's Art of the Heart-Mind texts, see: Reid, Dan G. *The Thread of Dao: Unraveling Early Daoist Oral Traditions in Guan Zi's Purifying the Heart-Mind (Bai Xin), Art of the Heart-Mind (Xin Shu), and Internal Cultivation (Nei Ye)*. Montreal: Center Ring Publications, 2017.

[27] The authorship of the *Nei Jing* (*Classic of Internal Medicine*) is uncertain, but the text is said by scholars to have appeared around 200 BC, compiling a variety of writings connected to early Daoist communities as evidenced by philosophical similarities in the *Guan Zi*, *Zhuang Zi*, and *Dao De Jing*.

[28] Usually translated as "empty," 冲 chong suggests an empty vessel, and literally means "immersion," made up of the radicals for "water" and "within." In ancient classics, chong appeared in compound words for youth (冲人 , 冲子) and so may have alluded to inexhaustible youth, and the 'eternal child' in this chapter.

[29] Chapter 20 may illustrate this concept.

[30] Please see "Straw-Dogs, Benevolence, and Chapter Five of the Dao De Jing," in the appendix.

[31] Literally "bag-flute." Heshang Gong's commentary seems to suggest a musical instrument, perhaps similar to the sheng.

[32] Heshang Gong may also use jing-shen (spiritual vitality) to refer to the organ spirits mentioned in chapter six. Jing-shen is somewhat like a derivative of shen (spirit), and should not be confused with the shen, which refers to the spiritual consciousness as a whole.

[33] See in the Appendix, "Straw-Dogs and Benevolence in Chapter Five of the Dao De Jing."

[34] Bob Flaws and Honora Lee Wolfe. *The Successful Chinese Herbalist*. Boulder: Blue Poppy Press, 2005. p. 50

[35] Heshang Gong diverges here from the *Yellow Emperor's Classic on Internal Medicine*, which places intention (yi) in the spleen and will (zhi) in the kidneys.

[36] "The five intrinsic natures" refer to the natural states of the human spirit before they are disturbed by the six emotions. The five intrinsic natures correspond to the five organs as follows: benevolence 仁 (ren)/liver, propriety 礼 (li)/heart, trustworthiness 信 (xin)/spleen, loyalty 義 (yi)/lungs, wisdom 智 (zhi)/kidneys.

[37] The six emotions are: like 好 (hao), dislike 惡 (wu), excitement 喜 (xi), anger 怒 (nu), sorrow 哀 (ai), and pleasure 樂 (le).

[38] *Nei Jing*, chapter eight states: "The spleen and stomach hold the office in charge of grain storage; They bring forth the five tastes (flavours)." Just as the lungs draw in Heavenly qi, the spleen and stomach draw in Earthly grains.

[39] The shen ming are also mentioned in the Tai Yi Sheng Shui, and texts by Zhuang Zi, Confucius, and Mo Tzu. They are considered as emissaries of Heaven which determine fortune and misfortune according to the purity of one's virtue. Shen ming can also mean spiritual intelligence, or "brilliance of the spirit."

[40] In Chinese medicine, kidney pathologies are associated with fear, while healthy kidneys prevent fear from arising. While the kidneys supply the resiliance of courage, the liver and gallbladder supply its determination.

[41] Zhuo (棁) is often translated as "blade," but refers to a wooden joist or weapon, as indicated by the radical for wood at the left side of this character.

[42] Li, 離 , contains imagery of a rare bird, meaning "flee" like a startled bird, rather than simply "leave, 去 , qu."

[43] In Chinese medicine, jing-qi (精氣) generally refers to the energetic essence of a particular organ or phenomena, such as the jing-qi of Heaven, or the jing-qi of the kidneys or lungs, etc. (see *Nei Jing, Ling Shu Jing*, ch. 17). Heshang Gong, uniquely, also refers to the jing-qi of Dao (see chapters 21 and 25).

[44] Undivided" usually meant " 無貳爾心 without doubt (without two) in your heart," but suggests the literal meaning here as well.

[45] The five directions with their elements are: wood/east, fire/south, earth/center, metal/west, and water/north

[46] See, for example, Guigu Zi's "Seven Techniques of Yin Talisman" in Reid, Dan G. *The Thread of Dao: Unraveling Early Daoist Oral Traditions in Guan Zi's Purifying the Heart-Mind (Bai Xin), Art of the Heart-Mind (Xin Shu), and Internal Cultivation (Nei Ye)*. Montreal: Center Ring Publications, 2017.

[47] The commentary here suggests that a great desire for these things makes one no longer able to perceive them.

[48] See footnote in chapter six for an explanation of the five intrinsic natures and the six emotions.

[49]志 Zhi, intention, will, resolve, consciousness.
There are also "five wills, 五志 (wuzhi)." These are emotional states associated with the five organs, which can exist in balance, but cause the six emotions when imbalanced.
The five wills and their correspondences are: vigor/anger 怒 (nu) in the liver, love/over-excitement 喜 (xi) in the heart, contemplation/worry 思 (si) in the spleen, nostalgia/sorrow 悲 (bei) in the lungs, and awe/fear 恐 (kong) in the kidneys.

[50] May refer to the "dantien" energy center below the navel

[51] See chapter 12

[52] See HSG's comments on "the eternal name" in chapter one.

[53] In *Rooted in Spirit: The Heart of Chinese Medicine*, Claude Larre and Elisabeth Rochat de la Valee explain jing-shen as the combined essences of the kidney's essence and heart's spirit. See footnote in chapter 10, above, for an explanation of jing-qi.

[54] See chapter 26, "The Virtue of Heaviness."

[55] 公 (gong) means both "elder" (as in Heshang Gong) and "impartial," as in serving the public, rather than private, interest.

[56] While moderate yet prolonged emotions can have this effect, it is generally intense and frantic emotions that bring about pathologies related to the respective organs. For example,

intense and frantic euphoria will quickly wear out the heart, while general happiness is excellent for overall health and immunity. The wood phase of the liver may express itself healthfully in the strength of the muscles and in one's determination; however, if one becomes upset with circumstances and lashes out in anger, this weakens the liver. The weakened liver may then make it more difficult to express the wood phase healthfully as determination, and result in its unhealthy expression as anger.

[57] " 太上 " also appears in various ancient books with the meaning "great antiquity" (trans. Legge) Given its reference to ancient rulers here, taishang may have suggested Taishang Huang: " 太上皇 Emperor's Father; 'Puppet Master.'" Please also see footnote in chapter 19 regarding the Three Sovereigns.

[58] The Three Sovereigns are: Fuxi, Nuwa, and Shennong. Nuwa (Fuxi's sister) is sometimes substituted in this group with Huang Di, The Yellow Emperor. Fuxi and Nuwa could be described as a god-like Adam and Eve who are also credited with a number of cultural advancements. Shennong is credited with the invention of agriculture and medicine. Huang Di is considered the father of Chinese civilization.

[59] Dao is empty. Emptiness is used (See chapter 11). To utilize emptiness is to be filled with Virtue (See chapter 22).

[60] See the second-last sentence of Heshang Gong's comments in chapter 21.

[61] 自矜 , translated as "self-aggrandize," means literally "to sympathize with oneself."

[62] Sandemose, Aksel; Eugene Gay-Tifft (trans.). *A Fugitive Crosses His Tracks* . New York: A.A. Knopf, 1936.

[63] Chapter 23 can be understood as an explanation of ganying 感應 (lit. "feeling response," aka "resonance response"), a term which appears in numerous ancient Chinese texts of various traditions, and which correlates closely to the modern term "the law of attraction."

[64] See my comments on chapter 39 for more on these ideas as they appear in chapter 23.

[65] Translated by Dan G. Reid

[66] For example, in chapter 76

[67] Chapter 16 explains that "the root" refers to silence and stillness (靜 , jing)

[68] Accroding to Chinese medicine, our mind and spirit are housed in the heart, while competence (zhi) and essence are housed in and supported by the kidneys. The interrelationship and balance between the heart and kidneys, paired in the shao yin meridian system, is integral to the vitality of all of these capacities.

[69] From *Zhuang Zi*, chapter four. Translated by Dan G. Reid.

[70] The left is the side of life, and yang (please see next footnote).

[71] In the 'pre-heaven' arrangement of the trigrams (representing natural forces), the yang trigrams are all on the left (Eastern) side, while the yin trigrams are all on the right (Western) side.

[72] Heshang Gong uses "ai 愛 , love" in this stanza, where Wang Bi and Fu Yi have "yi, 衣 , clothe." The word "ai 愛 , love/care/cherish" appears about three-dozen times in

Heshang Gong's commentary, showing that he felt it was a worthy virtue to cultivate along with detachment from desires.

[73] The names of these tones translate respectively as: the temple, the merchant, the wine vessel, the invitation, and the feather. They are the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 5th, and 6th degrees of a major scale. This scale also begins on different degrees to create "modes" as in Western music. Note that the name of the 5th degree is "the invitation," resembling the Western theory that a "dominant" chord urges resolution back to the "tonic," here called "the temple."

[74] Note the reference to shen ming in HSGs comments on line one as "spiritual lights," and on line two as "spiritual intelligence/radiance."

[75] Translated by Dan G. Reid

[76] See previous line.

[77] See chapter 46.

[78] "Jing-qi." See chapter 21.

[79] 天行健，君子以自強不息

[80] Note that both tradition and the concensus of scholarship date the Bai Xin before the Dao De Jing.

[81] Reid, Dan G. *The Thread of Dao: Unraveling Early Daoist Oral Traditions in Guan Zi's Purifying the Heart-Mind (Bai Xin), Art of the Heart-Mind (Xin Shu), and Internal Cultivation (Nei Ye)*. Montreal: Center Ring Publications, 2017.

[82] Ibid.

[83] This may also explain what is meant by "(To be a person of) loss, be one with loss" in chapter 23.

[84] See also chapter 50:

"I have heard that those who are good at absorbing life
Travel the land without encountering rhinoceros or tigers
That they walk into groups of soldiers
Without requiring armour, or soldiers, for protection
The rhinoceros has no place to thrust its horn
The tiger has no place to grab with its claw
And the soldier has nowhere to place his weapon
Why is this so?
Because these people are without any death-traps"

[85]There are conflicting theories as to why the lowest student laughs – that he is an unassuming sage, or that he is simply arrogant. On the other hand, it may be that the following descriptions of Dao are so seemingly topsy turvy that they will make the lowest student laugh; yet, if they were not like this, they would not describe the Dao.

[86] Reflecting Heshang Gong's explanation of the Three, Wang Ju Yi states in *Applied Channel Theory in Chinese Medicine* (Eastland Press, 2008): "So, in breaking yin and yang down into three parts, the ancient philosophers were not only accounting for the fact that

yin and yang in combination create qi, but also that there is a pivot between yin and yang that is itself a state of being."

[87] Yang sheng is an ancient term which has largely been replaced in modern times by the term qi gong (energy-breath work), though it is still widely in use. Heshang Gong uses the term yang sheng in chapter 50, though it dates back to at least Xun Zi (c. 310-235 BC).

[88] Tensing the muscles in cold weather inhibits warmth from energy circulation, while deep relaxation increases it.

[89] *Nei Jing Su Wen* chapter 3, and many commentaries pertaining to balancing yin and yang in the *Nei Jing,* support this understanding.

[90] The term "the hundred families" is synonymous with "all people," while indicating clan divisions. Until approximately 500 BC, only people in the ruling and aristocratic classes held one of these family names.

[91] The nine apertures are the eyes (2), ears (2), nostrils (2), mouth, anus, and urethra. The four closures refer to the feet and hands.

[92] Larre, Claude and Rochat de la Vallee, Elizabeth. *Rooted in Spirit: The Heart of Chinese Medicine.* New York: Station Hill Press, 1992.

[93] In their commentary on chapter eight of the *Ling Shu Jing*, Claude Larre and Elisabeth Rochat de la Vallée point out that, like chapter 50 of the *Dao De Jing*, the *Ling Shu Jing* also delineates 13 facets of life which develop in the process of forming a human life, the same facets which degenerate in the process of death. Those 13 facets in the *Ling Shu Jing* are: Virtue (from Heaven), qi (from Earth), life (生), jing (essence), shen (spirit), hun, po, the heart-mind, intention, will, thought, contemplation, and wisdom/competence (智).

A shared tradition behind DDJ50 and LSJ8 may be evidenced by the fact that DDJ50 is followed by DDJ51's description of De, a description which supports the *Ling Shu Jing*'s role for De in the creation of life.

See: Larre, Claude and Rochat de la Vallee, Elizabeth. *Rooted in Spirit: The Heart of Chinese Medicine.* New York: Station Hill Press, 1992. p. 152

[94] See chapter 8 of the Ling Shu Jing, quoted above in chapter 21.

[95] See chapter 13 for a similar comment.

[96] Carl Jung famously wrote a commentary for the Wilhelm/Baynes translation of *Secret of the Golden Flower* and credited it with influencing his understanding of consciousness.

[97] The term "Genuien Person" (zhen ren) appears numerous times in the *Zhuang Zi*, and refers to those whose simplicity and purity have reached a state of perfection.

[98] See "Zhan Zhuang" for more on this meditation posture.

[99] See, also, the reference to chapter 54 in my comments on chapter 74.

[100] Translation by Dan G. Reid, found in: "*The Thread of Dao: Unraveling Early Daoist Oral Traditions*…" (2017).

[101] Chapter 41 includes the line "When the lowest student hears the Way, he breaks into a great laugh."

[102] Chapter 71 includes the line “Not knowing, but thinking you know, is illness.”

[103] A similar phrase appears in The Art of War (500BC), 以正合，以奇勝 “Use alignment to unite. Use the unexpected/unusual to conquer.” Apparently a common turn of phrase, it appears here to show this effect in society as well.

[104] The *Art of the Heart-Mind (Xin Shu)* is said by both tradition and modern re-dating to have preceded Lao Zi’s *Dao De Jing*. It also likely preceded the *Nei Ye*, which appears to have been a redacted synthesis of the *Xin Shu* and similar teachings (see *The Thread of Dao: Unraveling Early Daoist Oral Traditions*, by D.G. Reid)

[105] “These wings” may otherwise refer to spirit and qi, said by Ma Danyang to be the underlying meaning of pure nature (xing) and destiny-life-force (ming), the combination of which is central to the Daoist Nei Dan (internal elixer) tradition. See Komjathy, Luis. *The Way of Complete Perfection: A Quanzhen Daoist Anthology*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013.

[106] Reid, Dan G. *The Thread of Dao: Unraveling Early Daoist Oral Traditions in Guan Zi’s Purifying the Heart-Mind (Bai Xin), Art of the Heart-Mind (Xin Shu), and Internal Cultivation (Nei Ye)*. Montreal: Center Ring Publications, 2017.

[107] From the *Huainan Zi* (edited by Liu An, 139 BC), chapter one. Translated by Dan G. Reid.

[108] The five spirits are discussed in chapter six

[109] The root should be understood here as one’s spiritual connection to Dao through true nature (xing) and destined life-force (ming), as explained in chapter 16. The stalk should be understood as the physical body. Leaking and flowing out can be understood as the energy-breath and spiritual vitality escaping for various reasons mentioned throughout Heshang Gong’s commentary (see also, the commentary on chapter 52).

Some Daoist texts, (for example, the scrolls mentioned in footnote #2) also say that the retention and transmutation of sexual fluids is required for physical, energetic, and spiritual cultivation. It is likely that Heshang Gong was aware of these practices, given his knowledge of ancient Chinese medical theory, and is referring to such retention as well.

[110] The heart-mind is also considered the throne of the body.

[111] See the *Xin Shu* on cultivating Virtue, in my comments on chapter 57.

[112] Komjathy, Luis. *The Way of Complete Perfection: A Quanzhen Daoist Anthology*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013.

[113] Reid, Dan G. *The Thread of Dao: Unraveling Early Daoist Oral Traditions in Guan Zi’s Purifying the Heart-Mind (Bai Xin), Art of the Heart-Mind (Xin Shu), and Internal Cultivation (Nei Ye)*. Montreal: Center Ring Publications, 2017.

[114] See footnote in chapter 19 about the Three Sovereigns

[115] See: Feng Yi, Wang; Hausen, Johan, *Discourse on Transforming Inner Nature*, Purple Cloud Press, 2018

[116] 1000 li = 500 kilometers

[117] “The root” is discussed in chapter 16

[118] Translated by Dan G. Reid

[119] Ming (明), often translated as "enlightenment," means "to see clearly," with its character denoting light by combining the radicals for the sun and moon.

[120] See: Reid, Dan G. *The Thread of Dao: Unraveling Early Daoist Oral Traditions in Guan Zi's Purifying the Heart-Mind (Bai Xin), Art of the Heart-Mind (Xin Shu), and Internal Cultivation (Nei Ye)*. Montreal: Center Ring Publications, 2017.

[121] Ci 慈 is most often translated as compassion, love, or charity. It can be understood here as kindness, encompassing both the practice of charity, and the feeling of compassion. Charity is advocated in chapter 81, chapter seven, and in numerous comments by Heshang Gong.

This stanza has been a source of interest and debate for both its simplified focus of practice, and its apparent similarity to the Christian doctrine of love. Heshang Gong clarifies the meaning of ci by using another word, ai 愛 , which refers to affectionate love. That Lao Zi follows his value for kindness/charity with his value for forgoing, while Heshang Gong depicts acts of charity so frequently, also suggests this meaning.

A strong connection exists between the three treasures of "kindness, forgoing, and putting the world first" and the selflessness illustrated in chapter seven.

[122] See chapter 73, which is dedicated to noble courage with a nuance of balance and kindness that can be more easily discerned by studying chapter 67.

[123] See also chapter 81

[124] See also chapters 7, 51, and 66

[125] Given the importance of these three treasures to Daoism, I feel I should point out that these interpretations are my own, and not, to my knowledge, those of any Daoist organizations.

[126] See my comments on chapter 68.

[127] Reading the repetition of bing (illness) as an adjective: "Therefore, only the sickly are not ill."

[128] See footnote in chapter 10 for an explanation of the vital energy-breaths (jing-qi).

[129] Courage is associated with the rising wood-energy of the liver and gallbladder (also associated with decision making), and with the free-flowing water-energy of the kidneys. The courage of water is exhibited in its natural spontaneity (zi ran). The courage of wood is exhibited in its determined expansion.

[130] See chapter 67, 68, 69

[131] Jue, 決 , "decide," is written as 氵 water + 夬 fork. The decision is followed at a fork in the river.

[132] https://www.britannica.com/biography/Charles-Fourier

[133]Albert Fried and Ronald Sanders, ed., *Socialist Thought: A Documentary History*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1964.

[134]Ibid .

[135] Kropotkin, Petr A. *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*. London: Heinemann, 1908.

[136] Bob Flaws and Honora Lee Wolfe. *The Successful Chinese Herbalist*. Boulder: Blue Poppy Press, 2005. p. 50

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Heshang Gong & Laozi

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The Complete Works of Zhuangzi



Translated by Burton Watson

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF ZHUANGZI

TRANSLATIONS FROM THE ASIAN CLASSICS

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Burton Watson

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INTRODUCTION

All we know about the identity of Zhuangzi, or Master Zhuang, are the few facts recorded in the brief notice given him in the *Shiji* or *Records of the Historian* (ch. 63) by Sima Qian (145?–89? BCE). According to this account, his personal name was Zhou, he was a native of a place called Meng, and he once served as "an official in the lacquer garden" there. Sima Qian adds that he lived at the same time as King Hui (370–319 BCE) of Liang and King Xuan (319–301 BCE) of Qi, which would make him a contemporary of Mencius, and that he wrote a work in 100,000 words or more that was "mostly in the nature of fable." A certain number of anecdotes concerning Zhuangzi appear in the book that bears his name, though it is difficult, in view of the deliberate fantasy that characterizes the book as a whole, to regard these as reliable biography.

Scholars disagree as to whether "lacquer garden" is the name of a specific location or simply means lacquer groves in general, and the location of Meng is uncertain, though it was probably in present-day Henan, south of the Yellow River. If this last supposition is correct, it means that Zhuang Zhou was a native of the state of Song, a fact that may have important implications.

When the Zhou people of western China conquered and replaced the Shang or Yin dynasty around the eleventh century BCE, they enfeoffed the descendants of the Shang kings as rulers of the region of Song in eastern Henan, in order that they might carry on the sacrifices to their illustrious ancestors. Though Song was never an important state, it managed to maintain its existence throughout the long centuries of the Zhou dynasty until 286 BCE, when it was overthrown by three of its neighbors and its territory divided up among them. It is natural to suppose that both the ruling house and many of the citizens of Song were descended from the Shang people and that they preserved to some extent the rites, customs, and ways of thought that had been characteristic of Shang culture. The *Book of Odes*, it may be noted, contains five "Hymns of Shang" that deal with the legends of the Shang royal family and that scholars agree were either composed or handed down by the rulers of the state of Song. Song led a precarious existence, constantly invaded or threatened by more powerful neighbors, and in later centuries its weakness was greatly aggravated by incessant internal strife. The ruling house of Song possessed a history unrivaled for its bloodiness, even in an age of disorder. Its inhabitants, as descendants of the conquered Shang people, were undoubtedly despised and oppressed by the more powerful states that belonged to the lineage of the Zhou conquerors, and the "man of Song" appears in the literature of late Zhou times as a stock figure of the ignorant simpleton.

All these facts of Song life—the preservation of the legends and religious beliefs of the Shang people, the political and social oppression, the despair born of weakness and strife—

may go far to elucidate the background from which Zhuangzi's thought sprang and to explain why, in its skepticism and mystical detachment, it differs so radically from Confucianism, the basically optimistic and strongly political-minded philosophy that developed in the Zhou lineage states of Lu and Qi. But since we know so little about the life and identity of Zhuang Zhou or his connection with the book that bears his name, it is perhaps best not to seek too assiduously to establish a direct causal connection between the background and the philosophy.

Whoever Zhuang Zhou was, the writings attributed to him bear the stamp of a brilliant and original mind. Instead of speculating on the possible sources from which this mind drew its ideas, let us turn to an examination of the ideas themselves. I shall simply state that from here on, when I speak of Zhuangzi, I am referring not to a specific individual known to us through history but to the mind, or group of minds, revealed in the text called *Zhuangzi*, particularly the first seven sections of that text.

The central theme of the *Zhuangzi* may be summed up in a single word: freedom. Essentially, all the philosophers of ancient China addressed themselves to the same problem: how is man to live in a world dominated by chaos, suffering, and absurdity? Nearly all of them answered with some concrete plan of action designed to reform the individual, to reform society, and eventually to free the world from its ills. The proposals put forward by the Confucians, the Mohists, and the Legalists, to name some of the principal schools of philosophy, all are different but all are based on the same kind of commonsense approach to the problem, and all seek concrete social, political, and ethical reforms to solve it. Zhuangzi's answer, however, the answer of one branch of the Daoist school, is radically different from these and is grounded on a wholly different type of thinking. It is the answer of a mystic, and in attempting to describe it here in clear and concrete language, I shall undoubtedly be doing violence to its essentially mystic and indescribable nature. Zhuangzi's answer to the question is: free yourself from the world.

What does he mean by this? In section 23 he tells the story of a man named Nanrong Zhu who went to visit the Daoist sage Laozi in hopes of finding some solution to his worries. When he appeared, Laozi promptly inquired, "Why did you come with all this crowd of people?" The man whirled around in astonishment to see if there was someone standing behind him. Needless to say, there was not; the "crowd of people" that he came with was the baggage of old ideas, the conventional concepts of right and wrong, good and bad, life and death, that he lugged about with him wherever he went.

It is this baggage of conventional values that man must first of all discard before he can be free. Zhuangzi saw the same human sufferings that Confucius, Mozi, and Mencius saw. He saw the man-made ills of war, poverty, and injustice. He saw the natural ills of disease and death. But he believed that they were ills only because man recognized them as such. If man would once forsake his habit of labeling things good or bad, desirable or undesirable, then the man-made ills, which are the product of man's purposeful and value-ridden actions, would disappear, and the natural ills that remain would no longer be seen as ills but as an inevitable part of the course of life. Thus in Zhuangzi's eyes, man is the author of his own suffering and bondage, and all his fears spring from the web of values created by himself alone. Zhuangzi sums up this whole diseased, fear-struck condition of mankind in

the macabre metaphor of the leper woman who "when she gives birth to a child in the deep of the night, rushes to fetch a torch and examine it, trembling with terror lest it look like herself" (sec. 12).

But how is one to persuade the leper woman that disease and ugliness are mere labels that have no real validity? It is no easy task, and for this reason the philosophy of Zhuangzi, like most mystical philosophies, has seldom been fully understood and embraced in its pure form by more than a small minority. Most of the philosophies of ancient China are addressed to the political or intellectual elite; Zhuangzi's is addressed to the spiritual elite.

Difficult though the task may be, however, Zhuangzi employs every resource of rhetoric in his efforts to awaken the reader to the essential meaninglessness of conventional values and to free him from their bondage. One device he uses to great effect is the pointed or paradoxical anecdote, the non sequitur or apparently nonsensical remark that jolts the mind into awareness of a truth outside the pale of ordinary logic—a device familiar to Western readers of Chinese and Japanese Zen literature. The other device most common in his writings is the pseudological discussion or debate that starts out sounding completely rational and sober and ends by reducing language to a gibbering inanity. These two devices are found in their purest form in the first two sections of the *Zhuangzi*, which together constitute one of the fiercest and most dazzling assaults ever made, not only on man's conventional system of values, but on his conventional concepts of time, space, reality, and causation as well.

Finally, Zhuangzi uses throughout his writings that deadliest of weapons against all that is pompous, staid, and holy: humor. Most Chinese philosophers employ humor sparingly—a wise decision, no doubt, in view of the serious tone they seek to maintain—and some of them seem never to have heard of it at all. Zhuangzi, on the contrary, makes it the very core of his style, for he appears to have known that one good laugh would do more than ten pages of harangue to shake the reader's confidence in the validity of his pat assumptions.

In Zhuangzi's view, the man who has freed himself from conventional standards of judgment can no longer be made to suffer, for he refuses to recognize poverty as any less desirable than affluence, to recognize death as any less desirable than life. He does not in any literal sense withdraw and hide from the world—to do so would show that he still passed judgment on the world. He remains within society but refrains from acting out of the motives that lead ordinary men to struggle for wealth, fame, success, or safety. He maintains a state that Zhuangzi refers to as *wuwei*, or inaction, meaning by this term not a forced quietude but a course of action that is not founded on purposeful motives of gain or striving. In such a state, all human actions become as spontaneous and mindless as those of the natural world. Man becomes one with Nature, or Heaven, as Zhuangzi calls it, and merges himself with Dao, or the Way, the underlying unity that embraces man, Nature, and all that is in the universe.

To describe this mindless, purposeless mode of life, Zhuangzi turns most often to the analogy of the artist or craftsman. The skilled woodcarver, the skilled butcher, the skilled swimmer does not ponder or ratiocinate on the course of action he should take; his skill has become so much a part of him that he merely acts instinctively and spontaneously and,

without knowing why, achieves success. Again, Zhuangzi employs the metaphor of a totally free and purposeless journey, using the word *you* (to wander, or a wandering) to designate the way in which the enlightened man wanders through all of creation, enjoying its delights without ever becoming attached to any one part of it.

But like all mystics, Zhuangzi insists that language is, in the end, grievously inadequate to describe the true Way, or the wonderful freedom of the man who has realized his identity with it. Again and again, he cautions that he is giving only a "rough" or "reckless" description of these things and what follows is usually a passage of highly poetic and paradoxical language that in fact conveys little more than the essential ineffability of such a state of being.

These mystical passages, with their wild and whirling words, need not puzzle the reader if he recognizes them for what they are, but there is one aspect of them that calls for comment. Often Zhuangzi describes the Daoist sage or enlightened man in terms suggesting that he possesses magical powers, that he moves in a trancelike state, that he is impervious to all harm and perhaps even is immortal. In these descriptions, Zhuangzi is probably drawing on the language of ancient Chinese religion and magic, and there were undoubtedly men in his day, as there were in later centuries, who believed that such magical powers, including the power to become immortal, were attainable. I am inclined to believe that Zhuangzi—that is, the author of the most profound and penetrating portions of the book that bears his name—intended these descriptions to be taken metaphorically. But there is evidence elsewhere in the *Zhuangzi* that they were taken literally, and countless followers of the Daoist school in later ages certainly interpreted them that way. Perhaps, as Arthur Waley says, the best approach is not to attempt to draw any sharp line between rationalism and superstition, between philosophy and magic, but to be prepared to find them mingled and overlapping. After all, it is the drawing of forced and unnatural distinctions that Zhuangzi most vehemently condemns. In the end, the best way to approach Zhuangzi, I believe, is not to attempt to subject his thought to rational and systematic analysis, but to read and reread his words until one has ceased to think of what he is saying and instead has developed an intuitive sense of the mind moving behind the words, and of the world in which it moves.

Zhuangzi, along with Laozi, or Lao Dan, has long been revered as one of the founders of the Daoist school. Because it was believed that Laozi was a contemporary of Confucius and that he was the author of the book known as the *Laozi*, or *Daodejing*, he has long been honored as the prime patriarch of the school, and Zhuangzi, as a later disciple and continuer of his doctrines. Most scholars now agree that it is impossible to say whether Laozi ever lived or, if he did, to determine exactly when. He appears in the pages of the *Zhuangzi* as one of a number of Daoist sages, but this signifies very little, since so many of the figures in Zhuangzi's writings are clearly fictitious. Zhuangzi at no point makes any reference to the *Daodejing*; there are a few places where he uses language that is similar to or identical with that of the *Daodejing*, but these do not prove that one text is earlier than the other or that there is any direct connection between them. Moreover, Zhuangzi's brand of Daoism, as is often pointed out, is in many respects quite different from that expounded

in the *Daodejing*. Therefore, though the two may have drawn on common sources and certainly became fused in later times, it seems best to consider them separately—which is why I have not discussed the philosophy of the *Daodejing* here. There is much disagreement among scholars as to when the *Daodejing* attained its present form, though it is safe to assume, I believe, that both the *Zhuangzi* and the *Daodejing* circulated in something like their present form from the second century BCE on, that is, from the beginning of the Han dynasty (202 BCE–220 CE).

In the early years of the Han dynasty, the *Daodejing*, probably because of its brevity and relative simplicity of language, seems to have enjoyed greater popularity than the *Zhuangzi*. It is repeatedly quoted or alluded to in the literature of the period, and several influential statesmen of the time, including a strong-willed empress dowager, advocated its doctrines. The court official Sima Tan (d. 110 BCE), father of the historian Sima Qian, wrote a brief essay, "A Discussion of the Essentials of the Six Schools," in which he reviewed the doctrines of the most important philosophical schools of the time and came out strongly in favor of Daoism. The *Huainanzi*, an eclectic work compiled by scholars of the court of Liu An (d. 122 BCE), the king of Huainan, dates from the same period; it includes many excerpts from the *Zhuangzi* and *Laozi* and, like Sima Tan, reserves the highest praise for the teachings of the Daoist school.

In spite of this relative popularity, however, Daoism was gradually overshadowed by Confucianism, which won official recognition from the Han emperor toward the end of the second century BCE and was declared the orthodox philosophy of the state, with a government university set up in the capital to teach its doctrines to prospective officials. This did not mean that Daoist writings were in any way suppressed. People were still free to read and study them, and we may be sure that educated men of the Han continued to savor the literary genius of Zhuangzi and Laozi as they had in the past. It simply meant that Daoist writings were not accorded any official recognition as the basis for decisions on state and public affairs.

In the intellectual world of late Zhou times, a number of rival doctrines had contended for supremacy, and the thinkers of the age had frequently attacked one another with vigor and asperity. Mozi had denounced Confucianism; Mencius and Xunzi had denounced Mohism; and the Legalist philosopher Han Feizi had denounced both doctrines. Zhuangzi had spent a certain amount of time attacking the philosophers of other schools—the pompously moralistic Confucians and Mohists, the Logicians Hui Shi and Gongsun Long with their hairsplitting semantics—though his customary weapon was parody and ridicule rather than polemic.

But by the first century BCE, many of the old sharp differences of opinion had been forgotten or softened by time. Mohism and the School of Logic had all but disappeared from the intellectual scene, and the principal battle was between the two rival philosophies of government: Confucianism, nominally the official doctrine of the state, with its emphasis on moral guidance of the people, and Legalism, which stressed regimentation through stern and detailed laws and held a strong attraction for the totalitarian-minded rulers and statesmen of the time. Daoism, being basically apolitical, remained in the background, to be drawn on by either side, though in Han times it was more often the

Confucian scholars who utilized the Daoist concept of inaction to oppose the state monopolies and other large-scale government enterprises advocated by the Legalist-minded officials.[1]

One should therefore think of Confucianism and Daoism in Han times not as rival systems demanding a choice for one side or the other but rather as two complementary doctrines, an ethical and political system for the conduct of public and family life, and a mystical philosophy for the spiritual nourishment of the individual, with the metaphysical teachings of the *Book of Changes* acting as a bridge between the two.

This approach is well exemplified in the lives of two scholars, Shu Guang and his nephew Shu Shou, students of the Confucian classics who served as tutors to the heir apparent of Emperor Xuan (r. 74–49 BCE), instructing him in the *Analects* and the *Classic of Filial Piety*. When Shu Guang felt he had reached the pinnacle of success and honor, he announced, in the words of Laozi, that "he who knows what is enough will not be shamed; he who knows where to stop will not be in danger." He and his nephew then petitioned the emperor for release from their official duties and, when it had been granted, retired to the country (*Hanshu* 71).

Or, to turn from officialdom to the world of private citizens, we may note the case of a scholar named Yan Junping of the region of Sichuan, who made his living as a diviner in the marketplace of Chengdu. He admitted that this was a rather lowly occupation but explained that he pursued it "because I can thereby benefit the common people. When men come to me with questions about something that is evil or improper, I use the oracle as an excuse to advise them on what is right. I advise sons to be filial, younger brothers to be obedient, subjects to be loyal, utilizing whatever the circumstances may be to lead the people to what is right—and more than half of them follow my advice!" So Yan Junping spent his days instructing the people in this ingenious fashion, in the dictates of conventional morality. But when he had made enough money for one day, "he shut up his stall, lowered the blinds, and gave instruction in the *Laozi*" (*Hanshu* 72). He was the author of a work, which was based on the doctrines of Laozi and Zhuangzi, and was a teacher of the most eminent Confucian philosopher of the time, Yang Xiong (53 BCE–18 CE). So compatible did the two doctrines seem, in fact, that one eulogist of the period went so far as to describe the ruling house of the Eastern Han as "pondering Confucius's injunction to 'master self,' practicing Laozi's ideal of 'constant sufficiency'" (Zhang Heng [78–139 CE], "*Fu* on the Eastern Capital").

Thus, like so many Chinese of later centuries, these men of the Han were both Confucians and Daoists by turns, depending on which doctrine was appropriate to their particular activities or phase of life, and in this way they contrived, with considerable success, to enjoy the best of two superb philosophies.

Confucianism continued to receive official support and to dominate the intellectual life of China during the remaining centuries of the Han dynasty. With the decay and final collapse of the dynasty in 220 CE, the empire split into three rival kingdoms and entered an era of strife and disunion, aggravated by repeated foreign invasion, that was to last until the Sui once more unified China in 581 CE. Though Daoism had by no means been forgotten

during the long years of the Han, the shock occasioned by the downfall of the dynasty and the political disorder that ensued led men to reexamine the texts of Daoism and the other ancient schools of philosophy with fresh interest to see if their teachings could be used in some way to supplement or correct the tenets of Confucianism, which had to some extent been discredited or called into doubt by the fall of the dynasty that had espoused them. The gradual spread of Buddhism during these same centuries helped foster this revival of interest in Daoism, often referred to as Neo-Daoism, because so many of the doctrines of the Indian religion appeared, on the surface at least, to be strikingly similar to those of Laozi and Zhuangzi.

At this time, the philosophy of Zhuangzi came to be studied and appreciated to a degree unknown before. Its unconventionality and skepticism appealed to an age of disorder in which conventional moral standards seemed to have lost all validity; its implications of a spiritual elite who could transcend the bonds of the world and wander in a realm beyond life and death—whether such release was interpreted metaphorically or literally—appealed to a society dominated by aristocratic tastes. It was an age of ferment, of widening intellectual horizons, in many ways like that of Zhuangzi himself, and one in which Zhuangzi's mystic vision of freedom seemed to make better sense than it ever had during the staid and stable years of the Han empire. It was also, to note its grimmer side, an age of political peril and violent reversal of fortune, and Zhuangzi's assurances that death is as much to be desired as life must have brought comfort to the numerous officials and intellectual leaders of the time who, victims of some sudden shift of power, were obliged to face the executioner's ax.

Our present version of the *Zhuangzi* dates from this period and was edited by Guo Xiang (d. 312 CE), one of the leaders of the Neo-Daoist movement. Guo Xiang appended a commentary to the text, the oldest commentary now in existence, which may in part be the work of a predecessor, Xiang Xiu, who lived in the first half of the third century CE. In any event, it is the text and commentary of Guo Xiang's edition of the *Zhuangzi* that form the basis for all our present versions of the work.

The bibliography compiled at the end of the first century BCE and preserved in the "Treatise on Literature" of the *Hanshu* lists a *Zhuangzi* in fifty-two sections. When Guo Xiang compiled his edition some three centuries later, he discarded a number of sections that he considered to be inferior and of patently spurious nature and settled on a text consisting of thirty-three sections. These he divided into three groups in the following order: seven sections called *neipian* or "inner chapters," fifteen sections called *waipian* or "outer chapters," and eleven sections called *zapian* or "miscellaneous chapters." The titles of the "inner chapters" are descriptive of the theme of the chapter as a whole and were probably affixed by the writer himself. Those of the "outer" and "miscellaneous" chapters, on the other hand, are taken from the opening words of the chapter and often have little to do with the chapter as a whole, suggesting that they were added later and that in some cases, these chapters are more in the nature of collections of fragments.

It is generally agreed that the seven "inner chapters," all of which are translated here, constitute the heart of the Zhuangzi. They contain all the important ideas, are written in a brilliant and distinctive—though difficult—style, and are probably the earliest in date,

though so far no way has been found to prove this last assumption. Whether they are the work of the man called Zhuang Zhou we do not know, but they are certainly in the main the product of a superbly keen and original mind, though they may contain brief interpolations by other hands. The remainder of the *Zhuangzi* is a mixture, sections of which may be as old—they are at times almost as brilliant—as the "inner chapters," sections of which may date from as late as the third or fourth centuries CE. In places these remaining sections seem to represent a deliberate imitation or reworking of passages and ideas found in the "inner chapters." Earlier scholars, who believed that the *Zhuangzi* was mainly, if not entirely, the work of a single writer, suggested that Zhuangzi fashioned these later chapters to act as "commentaries" or "explications" of his basic text, the seven "inner chapters," and this view is by no means untenable, though it seems more likely that they are the work of somewhat later writers.

Some parts of the "outer" and "miscellaneous" chapters, for example, sections 8–11, seem, by their style and philosophical vocabulary, definitely to date from a period later than that of the "inner chapters." They contain a number of passages that closely parallel the *Daodejing* of Laozi, and it has been suggested that they represent the efforts of a writer or writers belonging to a "Laozi" wing of the Daoist school to bring about a fusion between the philosophies of Zhuangzi and Laozi, which, as we have seen, were at first quite separate. They are particularly insistent in their view of history as a steady devolution from the simplicity of high antiquity, a view characteristic of the *Daodejing*, and attack all man's inventions, all human civilization and culture, with a shrill, almost pathological fury that is unlike anything found in the "inner chapters."

Other passages, for example, the final part of section 11, appear to be attempts to combine the ideals of the Daoist, Confucian, Mohist, and Legalist schools into a single hierarchical system of values, the type of sweeping syncretism so common in philosophical works of the Qin and early Han periods.

Sections 28–31 of the "miscellaneous chapters" have long been eyed with suspicion, for reasons of both style and content. Section 30 is particularly suspect because it lacks any commentary by Guo Xiang and has little or nothing to do with the philosophy of the *Zhuangzi*. These four sections, though of little originality in thought, are important to the study of Chinese literature because of the skill with which the rather elaborate settings of the anecdotes are handled, particularly in section 29. They represent an intermediate stage between the pure philosophical anecdote of early times such as is found in the "inner chapters," which has little or no narrative or descriptive framework, and the fully developed "tale" of later centuries. If we could determine their date of composition—my own guess would be early Han, since they are so close in form and style to such works as the "Diviners of Lucky Days" chapter in the *Shiji*[2]—we might fit them into their proper place in the history of the development of Chinese fiction.

It was customary in the compiling of early Chinese books to place at the end of such material as we in the West place at the beginning, that is, a table of contents, a summary of the work as a whole, biographical information on the author and his aims, and so forth. Section 32 probably owes its present position as the next to last chapter in the text to the

fact that it contains an anecdote dealing with the funeral of Zhuangzi and thus in a sense represents the conclusion of his "biography." Section 33, with which the *Zhuangzi* ends, differs in nature from all the other chapters. Entitled "The World," it is a survey of the world of Chinese philosophy in late Zhou times, containing descriptions of most of the major thinkers and philosophical schools, including that of Zhuangzi himself. It is the earliest such description we have and is of enormous value in the study of Chinese thought, particularly as it contains accounts of thinkers whose writings no longer survive. Exactly what relation it is intended to bear to the rest of the *Zhuangzi* is uncertain; we can only be thankful that because of its inclusion in that work, it has survived the centuries.

Waley, in his discussion of the authorship of the *Zhuangzi*, states that "some parts are by a splendid poet, others are by a feeble scribbler" (*Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China*, p. 255). In my earlier selected translation, *Zhuangzi: Basic Writings*, I tried to avoid the feeble scribbler, presenting only sections 1–7, 17–19, and 26. The present work, however, is a complete translation of the *Zhuangzi*, and the reader must take the dull parts with the good. I have already noted how the thought of the "outer" and "miscellaneous" chapters sometimes merely apes, at other times departs from, or even contradicts, that of the "inner chapters." The same may be said of the style. The "inner chapters" are characterized by a wealth of lively and witty anecdotes, and anecdotes of a similar excellence may be found in the other chapters as well, among them some of the most famous passages in the *Zhuangzi*. But this high level is not always maintained, and one also finds anecdotes that are long-winded, clumsy in construction, or even seem to lack any point, though these defects may be due in part to faulty transmission of the text. Passages in which the writer sermonizes in his own words, relatively few in the "inner chapters," increase in length and frequency, sometimes occupying a whole chapter, and are often marred by wearisome prolixity. Even the techniques of wordplay and paradox, so brilliantly exploited in the "inner chapters," tend at times to deteriorate into mere mannerism, and the pure poetry of the Dao gives way to Daoist jargon and cant. All this is hardly to be wondered at in a work composed by various hands over a considerable period of time; I mention it here only to prepare the reader for the unevenness he will encounter and to encourage him to push on to the delights that lie ahead.

Though a considerable amount of critical work has been done on the text of the *Zhuangzi*, and there are an almost endless number of commentaries, the meaning of many passages remains a matter of doubt. There are two reasons for this: the intrinsic difficulty of Zhuangzi's language and thought, and the textual corruption that has arisen, almost inevitably we may suppose, in the transmission of such a difficult text.

Zhuangzi, as I have said, rejects all conventional values, and as a result, like so many mystical writers, he rejects the conventional values of words as well, deliberately employing them to mean the opposite of what they ordinarily mean in order to demonstrate their essential meaninglessness. When a writer does this, he of course invites misunderstanding, no matter how dazzling the literary effect he achieves. This is what has happened to Zhuangzi. His grammar is regular enough; his sentence patterns are, for the most part, like those of other writers of the period; but because what he says is so often the direct opposite of what anyone else would say, commentators have again and again been

led to wonder if he really does not mean something other than what he says or if the text is perhaps corrupt.

In order to pry men loose from their conventional concepts of goodness and beauty, for example, Zhuangzi deliberately glorifies everything that to ordinary eyes appears sordid, base, or bizarre—ex-criminals who have suffered mutilating punishments, men who are horribly ugly or deformed, creatures of grotesque shape or size. As an illustration—and because the passage is so important to Daoist philosophy—let me quote one of Zhuangzi's most famous descriptions of the Dao or the Way:

> Master Dongguo asked Zhuangzi, "This thing called the Way—where does it exist?"
> Zhuangzi said, "There's no place it doesn't exist."
> "Come," said Master Dongguo, "you must be more specific!"
> "It is in the ant."
> "As low a thing as that?"
> "It is in the panic grass."
> "But that's lower still!"
> "It is in the tiles and shards."
> "How can it be so low?"
> "It is in the piss and shit." (sec. 22)

But in Zhuangzi's language, if ugly stands for beautiful, or something beyond both beauty and ugliness, and bad stands for good, or something beyond it, then what do beautiful and good stand for? In other words, since Zhuangzi deliberately turns the values of words upside down, how are we ever to know for certain when he is sincerely praising something? This is the most serious problem one encounters in the interpretation of Daoist writings, as it is in the interpretation of the writings of Zen Buddhism. In any given passage, is the writer, regardless of what words he uses, describing a state of affairs that is in his eyes commendable or uncommendable? Depending on how one answers this question, the interpretation of the entire passage will differ radically. (An example of this problem is pointed out in note 4 to section 3.)

As has already been suggested, Zhuangzi, though he writes in prose, uses words in the manner of a poet, particularly in the lyrical descriptions of the Way or the Daoist sage, where meaning often takes second place to sound and emotive force. In the broader sense of the word, his work is in fact one of the greatest poems of ancient China. For this reason, it seems to me particularly important to stick as closely as possible to the precise wording and imagery of the Chinese. For example, in section 5 there is a passage in which Confucius is pictured discussing the need to harmonize with and delight in all the manifold ups and downs of human existence, to "master them and never be at a loss for joy," adding that one should "make it be spring with everything." This last phrase, literally, "with things make spring," is an example of the highly poetic language that Zhuangzi employs in such passages and for which he is justly admired. To render the phrase as "live in peace with mankind" (Giles), or "be kind with things" (Feng Youlan) not only blurs the image of the original beyond recognition but suggests that Zhuangzi is mouthing platitudes when in fact

he is using the Chinese language as it had never been used before. No other text of early times, with the possible exception of the *Zuozhuan*, so fully exploits the beauties of ancient Chinese—its vigor, its economy, its richness and symmetry—and it is for this reason that I have chosen to render the wording of the original as closely as possible, even though the English that results may at times sound somewhat strange. Zhuangzi uses words in unconventional ways, and he deserves a translation that at least attempts to do justice to his imaginativeness.

I have not hesitated to make free use of colloquialisms—a great part of the *Zhuangzi* is in the form of informal dialogues—or of slang; I do so, however, not in order to create a "jazzy" effect but because such words or constructions seem to me to get closer to the original than more formal English could. I have also tried to suggest some of the auditory effects and wordplays of the original. Frequently Zhuangzi takes a single word such as "knowledge," or a pair such as "Heaven" and "man," and plays at great length on their various usages and shades of meaning, employing them now as nouns, later as verbs. In order to follow the continuity of such passages, the reader must realize that it is a single word that is being played with, and I have therefore worked to preserve this unity in translation, though it may lead at times to a certain amount of awkwardness and pleonasm. The alliterative and rhyming binomes that contribute so much to the vividness of ancient Chinese I have tried to suggest by the use of similar devices in English, though I have employed them with somewhat less frequency than has the original, lest they become obtrusive. I have not attempted to reproduce the occasional rhymed passages, merely pointing out their existence in notes, since rhyme in present-day English, unless used with great skill, has a tendency, it seems to me, to sound either ironic or facetious, and I do not believe that was its effect in ancient Chinese. Whenever I have substantially added to the wording of the original in translation, I have enclosed the added words in brackets.

Needless to say, for all my zeal to render the literal meaning of the original, I could not do so until I had first decided what it was, and in this sense my translation is as much an interpretation, and as tentative in many places, as any other. Waley remarks that translations of the *Zhuangzi* often tend to be "translations of the commentaries rather than of the text," because "the text itself is so corrupt as to be frequently quite unintelligible" (*Three Ways of Thought*, p. 199). In his own study of Zhuangzi, he attempts to get around this difficulty by translating at times not from the *Zhuangzi* itself but from parallel passages found in the *Huainanzi*, a work of the second century BCE already mentioned, and the *Liezi*, a Daoist work of uncertain date, whose text is more intelligible. These passages in the *Huainanzi* and *Liezi* may in fact represent the original version of passages that later became corrupt in the *Zhuangzi* itself. On the other hand, however, they may represent emended and rewritten versions created by the compilers of the *Huainanzi* and *Liezi* because they could not understand the *Zhuangzi* text itself.

What, then, are we to do with the passages that, in Waley's words, are "quite unintelligible"? If they are not to be omitted entirely, emendation would seem to be the only solution. But here we must note some of the dangers involved. First of all, is the passage in fact really unintelligible? Often, in the case of ancient Chinese, a different punctuation of the text or a different interpretation of the words makes sense of what at

first glance seemed nonsense. In the *Han Feizi* translation I did some years ago, for example, I allowed myself at one point to be awed by the flat assertion of the Chinese commentator I was following that the text made no sense as it stood, and I adopted the emendation he suggested; it has since been pointed out to me that the sentence makes perfectly good sense *when properly understood* and can even be supported by examples of the same usage in other works of the period. In this case, the commentator was too quick in emending, and I, too uncritical in accepting his judgment that emendation was necessary.

Again, what seems like a garble in the text may be unintelligible only because we lack sufficient knowledge of early Chinese society, customs, or religion. This is apt to be particularly true with a text like the *Zhuangzi*, which makes such frequent reference to folk beliefs and scenes of everyday life. Let me give an example, not from the *Zhuangzi*, but from the Confucian classic known as the *Shujing*, or *Book of Documents*, traditionally supposed to have been compiled and edited by Confucius himself. In the first section, the "Canon of Yao," near the beginning, there is a passage describing certain ritual and governmental activities associated with each of the four directions. Four times a brief sentence appears that begins "Its people. …" Thanks to information gained from the study of Shang period oracle bone inscriptions, we now know that the characters that follow the word "people" are the names of deities associated with each of the four directions, and of the winds of those directions. But by the time the first commentaries on the text were written, this fact was no longer known, and commentators had no choice but to struggle valiantly in an effort to interpret the names of the wind gods as verbs or adjectives descriptive of the people of the four directions. Now that we know the solution to the riddle, their struggles seem pathetic; but the point to note is that because of the sanctity of the text, they did not resort to facile emendation, and so the riddle continued to remain soluble until such time as the right data could be brought to bear on it. With examples such as these in mind, one may well shudder at the very thought of emendation.

Nevertheless, there are cases when emendation seems justifiable. Like Theobald's famous "a' babbled of green fields" emendation in *Henry V*, they may or may not represent what the author wrote, but they make beautiful sense of what was gibberish before and allow us to get on to the next line. Moreover, with a few notable exceptions such as the closing sentence of section 2, these garbles in the *Zhuangzi*, as the reader will see from my notes, appear for the most part not in places that are crucial to the overall philosophical import of the text but in the anecdotes or homely analogies with which Zhuangzi illustrates his ideas. Even if emended or interpreted incorrectly, therefore, they will not greatly affect the meaning of the whole. The real peril here is that commentators who are inclined by nature to emendation are seldom content to emend only those passages that are real gibberish but, giddy with their own ingenuity, go on to suggest ways to "improve" the reading of what is already intelligible, albeit a bit awkward or strange. The translator, if he is not to be seduced into following them in this beguiling but indefensible pastime, must constantly ask himself, is this emendation necessary?

As I trust I have made clear, the *Zhuangzi* confronts the translator with countless passages in which, in order to make sense, he must choose from a wide variety of interpretations and/or suggestions for emendation—more, probably, than any other full-

length text of ancient China—and of course, critics may in turn question each of his choices if they feel it was not wisely made. There is no end to this game. In the note on bibliography at the end of this introduction, I mention briefly the commentaries and translations that I have drawn on. But the result inevitably represents my own interpretation of the text and will not be quite like that of anyone else. With a work of such difficulty, there can never be anything like a definitive translation, because there is no such thing as a definitive interpretation. Every translator who takes up the text will produce his own *Zhuangzi*, and the more that are available for the reader to enjoy and compare, the better.

As I have said, much of the *Zhuangzi* consists of anecdotes, often two or three anecdotes in a row that illustrate the same general theme and appear to be hardly more than different versions of a single story. In these anecdotes a variety of historical and semihistorical personages appear, as well as a delightful assortment of gods, mythical heroes, and talking trees, birds, insects, and other creatures. One such historical figure, the logician philosopher Hui Shi or Huizi, who seems to have been a friend of Zhuangzi, always represents the same viewpoint: that of "intellectuality as opposed to imagination," as Waley puts it (*Three Ways of Thought*, p. 12). But there is no consistency in the variety of viewpoints which the other figures are made to expound. Thus Confucius sometimes preaches conventional Confucian morality, while at other times he speaks in the words of a true Daoist sage, and even Zhuangzi himself appears on occasion in the role of the convention-ridden fool. The reader must learn to expect any opinion whatsoever from any source, to savor the outrageous incongruities, and to judge for himself which of the opinions offered represents the highest level of enlightenment.

In closing, I may add a word on the translation of certain key philosophical terms in the *Zhuangzi*. The term *Dao* I have translated throughout as "the Way," in order to remain consistent with the practice adopted in my earlier translations from other Chinese philosophers of the late Zhou. It is perfectly true that Zhuangzi means by this word something quite different from what Mozi, Xunzi, or Han Feizi meant. But all of them used the same Chinese word, and the reader may easily judge for himself how they interpreted it by observing the ways in which they used it. For the same reason, I have rendered *Tian* as "Heaven" or "heavenly" in nearly all cases. Zhuangzi uses the word to mean Nature, what pertains to the natural, as opposed to the artificial, or as a synonym for the Way. This, too, is very different from what Mozi or Xunzi meant by the word *Tian*, but again the reader may judge the differences for himself. In nearly all cases I have rendered *de* as "virtue" except when it has the meaning of a favor or good deed done for someone. This word presents certain difficulties in Zhuangzi. Sometimes he employs it to mean conventional virtue—that is, virtue in the Confucian or Mohist sense—in which case it has bad connotations; at other times he employs it in a good sense to mean the true virtue or vital power that belongs to the man of Dao. (Compare Waley's rendering of the title *Daodejing* as *The Way and Its Power*). I prefer not to try to distinguish these two usages in the translation because I do not wish to impose on the English a distinction that is not explicit in the original. The reader should keep in mind, incidentally, that the words "virtue" (*de*) and "gain" or "to get" (*de*) are homophones, and this fact is the basis of frequent puns and wordplays—that is, the man of true Daoist virtue is one who, as we would say in English,

has “got it.” As already mentioned, I render *wuwei* as “inaction” and *you* as “to wander” or “wandering.” In addition to inventing legendary figures with amusing and often significant names, Zhuangzi invents a variety of mysterious and high-sounding pseudotechnical terms to refer to the Way or the person who has made himself one with it. I have given a literal translation of such terms and capitalized them in order to indicate their special character—for example, Great Clod, Supreme Swindle, True Man. The reader need not puzzle over their precise meaning, since in the end they all refer to essentially the same thing—the inexpressible Absolute.

I used as the basis of my translation the *Zhuangzi buzheng* of Liu Wendian (Shanghai, 1947), principally because of its magnificent legibility, though I did not always follow its punctuation. It would be impractical to list all the commentaries I drew on directly or indirectly; I mention by name in my notes the commentator I followed in questionable passages, and the reader may identify the works by consulting the exhaustive bibliography of *Zhuangzi* commentaries in Guan Feng’s modern-language translation and study, *Zhuangzi neipian yijie he pipan* (Peking, 1961), pp. 370–403. Two works have been of particular assistance to me: one is the modern Chinese translation by Guan Feng just cited; the other is the Japanese translation by Fukunaga Mitsuji, *Sōshi*, in the Chūgoku kotensen series. The former is confined to the “inner chapters,” the first seven sections of the text; the latter, a complete translation, is in three volumes, *Naihen* (Tokyo, 1956), *Gaihen* (1966), and *Zappen* (1967). Both works draw on all the important recent studies and contain invaluable notes and explanation. I have also consulted the complete modern Japanese translation by Hara Tomio, *Gendaigoyaku Sōshi* (Tokyo, 1962). Three works of the philosophy of Zhuangzi may be noted here: the *Zhuangzi zhexue taolun ji* (Peking, 1962), a collection of essays by Feng Youlan, Kuan Feng, and other Zhuangzi experts; and *Sōshi* (Tokyo, 1964) by Fukunaga Mitsuji, a study of Zhuangzi’s thought intended for the general reader. Also of aid to the student and translator of Zhuangzi is the *Concordance to Chuang Tzu*, Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series, Supplement No. 20 (1947).

I have consulted several earlier English translations: that by Herbert A. Giles, *Chuang Tzu: Mystic*, *Moralist*, *and Social Reformer* (London, 1889); that by James Legge in *The Sacred Books of the East*, vols. XXXIX–XL; that by James R. Ware, *The Sayings of Chuang Chou* (New York, New American Library [Mentor], 1963); that by Yu-lan Fung (Feng Youlan), *Chuang Tzu* (Shanghai, 1933); and the excerpts translated by Arthur Waley in *Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China* (London, 1939), and by Lin Yutang in *The Wisdom of Laotse* (Modern Library, 1948). The first three are complete translations of the *Zhuangzi*; the fourth is a translation of the “inner chapters”; while the last two contain excerpts from many different sections.

Giles, who produced the first complete English translation, is very free in his rendering and again and again substitutes what strike me as tiresome Victorian clichés for the complex and beautiful language of the original. In spite of his offensive “literary” tone, however, he generally gets at what appears to me to be the real meaning of the text. Legge, whose translation appeared in 1891, is far more painstaking in reproducing the literal meaning, but perhaps because of his long years of work on the Confucian texts, he seems

to miss Zhuangzi's point rather often and to labor to make common sense out of paradox and fantasy. Professor Ware's translation is marked by the peculiar terminology and unconventional interpretations characteristic of his other translations from early Chinese philosophy—for example, he describes Zhuangzi as a member of the "progressive, dynamic wing of Confucianism"—and for this reason, and because it lacks notes or adequate introductory material, it is of questionable value. Youlan Feng's work is important today mainly because it contains translations from the Guo Xiang commentary. Lin Yutang's *The Wisdom of Laotse* contains a great many well-translated anecdotes and isolated passages from the *Zhuangzi*, but they have been chopped up and completely rearranged to serve as a commentary on the *Daodejing*, making it impossible to appreciate the form and relationship that they have in the original. To my mind, by far the most readable and reliable of the *Zhuangzi* translations to date are those by Arthur Waley, though unfortunately they represent only a fraction of the text. Readers interested in the literary qualities of the text should also look at the "imitations" of passages in the *Zhuangzi* prepared by Thomas Merton on the basis of existing translations in Western languages, in his *The Way of Chuang Tzu* (New York, New Directions, 1965). They give a fine sense of the liveliness and poetry of Zhuangzi's style and are actually almost as close to the original as the translations on which they are based.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr. D. C. Lau, translator of *Lao Tzu: Tao Te Ching* (Penguin Books, 1963), for his careful reading and criticisms of my *Chuang Tzu: Basic Writings* (Columbia University Press, 1964). I have availed myself of many of his suggestions in revising my earlier translations.

1. See, for example, the *Yantie lun*, or *Debates on Salt and Iron*, sec. 57, where the Confucian literati quote Laozi to support their ideal of laissez-faire government. Similarly, they quote or refer to Mohist teachings when they wish to emphasize frugality and the need to reduce government expenditures.

2. *Shiji* 127; see the translator's *Records of the Grand Historian* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1961), II, 468–75. It should be noted that the *Shiji*, in its account of Zhuangzi, mentions two of these sections by name, sec. 29, "Robber Zhi," and sec. 31, "The Old Fisherman," though of course we cannot be certain that the texts of these sections we have today are the ones that Sima Qian knew.

OUTLINE OF EARLY CHINESE HISTORY

(Dates and entries before 841 BCE are traditional)

BCE	*Dynasty*		
2852		Culture Heroes	Fu Xi, inventor of writing, fishing, trapping
2737			Shennong, inventor of agriculture, commerce
2697			Yellow Emperor
2357		Sage Kings	Yao
2255			Shun
2205	Xia Dynasty		Yu, virtuous founder of dynasty
1818			Jie, degenerate terminator of dynasty
1766			King Tang, virtuous founder of dynasty
[ca. 1300]	Shang or Yin Dynasty		[Beginning of archaeological evidence]
1154			Zhou, degenerate terminator of dynasty
Three Dynasties			
1122			King Wen, virtuous founder of dynasty
1115		Western Zhou	King Wu, virtuous founder of dynasty
			King Cheng, virtuous founder of dynasty
			(Duke of Zhou, regent to King Cheng)
878	Zhou Dynasty		King Li
781			
771			King You
722		Eastern Zhou	Spring and Autumn period (722–481)
			Period of the "hundred philosophers" (551–ca. 233): Confucius, Mozi, Laozi (?), Mencius, Zhuangzi, Hui Shi, Shang Yang, Gongsun Long, Xunzi, Han Feizi
551			
403			Warring States period (403–221)
4th to 3rd cent.			Extensive wall-building and waterworks by Qin and other states
249			Lu Buwei, prime minister of Qin
221	Qin Dynasty		The First Emperor, Li Si, prime minister
214	(221–207 BCE)		The Great Wall completed

1

FREE AND EASY WANDERING

In the northern darkness there is a fish and his name is Kun.[1] The Kun is so huge I don't know how many thousand *li* he measures. He changes and becomes a bird whose name is Peng. The back of the Peng measures I don't know how many thousand *li* across, and when he rises up and flies off, his wings are like clouds all over the sky. When the sea begins to move,[2] this bird sets off for the southern darkness, which is the Lake of Heaven.

The *Universal Harmony*[3] records various wonders, and it says: "When the Peng journeys to the southern darkness, the waters are roiled for three thousand *li*. He beats the whirlwind and rises ninety thousand *li*, setting off on the sixth-month gale." Wavering heat, bits of dust, living things blown about by the wind—the sky looks very blue. Is that its real color, or is it because it is so far away and has no end? When the bird looks down, all he sees is blue, too.

If water is not piled up deep enough, it won't have the strength to bear up a big boat. Pour a cup of water into a hollow in the floor, and bits of trash will sail on it like boats. But set the cup there, and it will stick fast, for the water is too shallow and the boat too large. If wind is not piled up deep enough, it won't have the strength to bear up great wings. Therefore when the Peng rises ninety thousand *li*, he must have the wind under him like that. Only then can he mount on the back of the wind, shoulder the blue sky, and nothing can hinder or block him. Only then can he set his eyes to the south.

The cicada and the little dove laugh at this, saying, "When we make an effort and fly up, we can get as far as the elm or the sapanwood tree, but sometimes we don't make it and just fall down on the ground. Now how is anyone going to go ninety thousand *li* to the south!"

If you go off to the green woods nearby, you can take along food for three meals and come back with your stomach as full as ever. If you are going a hundred *li*, you must grind your grain the night before; and if you are going a thousand *li*, you must start getting the provisions together three months in advance. What do these two creatures understand? Little understanding cannot come up to great understanding; the short-lived cannot come up to the long-lived.

How do I know this is so? The morning mushroom knows nothing of twilight and dawn; the summer cicada knows nothing of spring and autumn. They are the short-lived. South of Chu there is a caterpillar that counts five hundred years as one spring and five hundred years as one autumn. Long, long ago there was a great rose of Sharon that counted eight

thousand years as one spring and eight thousand years as one autumn. They are the long-lived. Yet Pengzu[4] alone is famous today for having lived a long time, and everybody tries to ape him. Isn't it pitiful!

Among the questions of Tang to Qi we find the same thing.[5] In the bald and barren north, there is a dark sea, the Lake of Heaven. In it is a fish that is several thousand *li* across, and no one knows how long. His name is Kun. There is also a bird there, named Peng, with a back like Mount Tai and wings like clouds filling the sky. He beats the whirlwind, leaps into the air, and rises up ninety thousand *li*, cutting through the clouds and mist, shouldering the blue sky, and then he turns his eyes south and prepares to journey to the southern darkness.

The little quail laughs at him, saying, "Where does he think *he's* going? I give a great leap and fly up, but I never get more than ten or twelve yards before I come down fluttering among the weeds and brambles. And that's the best kind of flying, anyway! Where does he think *he's* going?" Such is the difference between big and little.

Therefore a man who has wisdom enough to fill one office effectively, good conduct enough to impress one community, virtue enough to please one ruler, or talent enough to be called into service in one state, has the same kind of self-pride as these little creatures. Song Rongzi[6] would certainly burst out laughing at such a man. The whole world could praise Song Rongzi and it wouldn't make him exert himself; the whole world could condemn him and it wouldn't make him mope. He drew a clear line between the internal and the external and recognized the boundaries of true glory and disgrace. But that was all. As far as the world went, he didn't fret and worry, but there was still ground he left unturned.

Liezi[7] could ride the wind and go soaring around with cool and breezy skill, but after fifteen days he came back to earth. As far as the search for good fortune went, he didn't fret and worry. He escaped the trouble of walking, but he still had to depend on something to get around. If he had only mounted on the truth of Heaven and Earth, ridden the changes of the six breaths, and thus wandered through the boundless, then what would he have had to depend on?

Therefore I say, the Perfect Man has no self; the Holy Man has no merit; the Sage has no fame.[8]

Yao wanted to cede the empire to Xu You. "When the sun and moon have already come out," he said, "it's a waste of light to go on burning the torches, isn't it? When the seasonal rains are falling, it's a waste of water to go on irrigating the fields. If you took the throne, the world would be well ordered. I go on occupying it, but all I can see are my failings. I beg to turn over the world to you."

Xu You said, "You govern the world and the world is already well governed. Now if I take your place, will I be doing it for a name? But name is only the guest of reality—will I be doing it so I can play the part of a guest? When the tailorbird builds her nest in the deep wood, she uses no more than one branch. When the mole drinks at the river, he takes no more than a bellyful. Go home and forget the matter, my lord. I have no use for the

rulership of the world! Though the cook may not run his kitchen properly, the priest and the impersonator of the dead at the sacrifice do not leap over the wine casks and sacrificial stands and go take his place."[9]

Jian Wu said to Lian Shu, "I was listening to Jie Yu's talk—big and nothing to back it up, going on and on without turning around. I was completely dumbfounded at his words—no more end than the Milky Way, wild and wide of the mark, never coming near human affairs!"

"What were his words like?" asked Lian Shu.

"He said that there is a Holy Man living on faraway Gushe Mountain, with skin like ice or snow and gentle and shy like a young girl. He doesn't eat the five grains but sucks the wind, drinks the dew, climbs up on the clouds and mist, rides a flying dragon, and wanders beyond the four seas. By concentrating his spirit, he can protect creatures from sickness and plague and make the harvest plentiful. I thought this all was insane and refused to believe it."

"You would!" said Lian Shu. "We can't expect a blind man to appreciate beautiful patterns or a deaf man to listen to bells and drums. And blindness and deafness are not confined to the body alone—the understanding has them, too, as your words just now have shown. This man, with this virtue of his, is about to embrace the ten thousand things and roll them into one. Though the age calls for reform, why should he wear himself out over the affairs of the world? There is nothing that can harm this man. Though floodwaters pile up to the sky, he will not drown. Though a great drought melts metal and stone and scorches the earth and hills, he will not be burned. From his dust and leavings alone, you could mold a Yao or a Shun! Why should he consent to bother about mere things?"

A man of Song who sold ceremonial hats made a trip to Yue, but the Yue people cut their hair short and tattooed their bodies and had no use for such things. Yao brought order to the people of the world and directed the government of all within the seas. But he went to see the Four Masters of the faraway Gushe Mountain, [and when he got home] north of the Fen River, he was dazed and had forgotten his kingdom there.

Huizi[10] said to Zhuangzi, "The king of Wei gave me some seeds of a huge gourd. I planted them, and when they grew up, the fruit was big enough to hold five piculs. I tried using it for a water container, but it was so heavy I couldn't lift it. I split it in half to make dippers, but they were so large and unwieldy that I couldn't dip them into anything. It's not that the gourds weren't fantastically big—but I decided they were of no use, and so I smashed them to pieces."

Zhuangzi said, "You certainly are dense when it comes to using big things! In Song there was a man who was skilled at making a salve to prevent chapped hands, and generation after generation his family made a living by bleaching silk in water. A traveler heard about the salve and offered to buy the prescription for a hundred measures of gold. The man called everyone to a family council. 'For generations we've been bleaching silk, and we've never made more than a few measures of gold,' he said. 'Now, if we sell our

secret, we can make a hundred measures in one morning. Let's let him have it!' The traveler got the salve and introduced it to the king of Wu, who was having trouble with the state of Yue. The king put the man in charge of his troops, and that winter they fought a naval battle with the men of Yue and gave them a bad beating.[11] A portion of the conquered territory was awarded to the man as a fief. The salve had the power to prevent chapped hands in either case; but one man used it to get a fief, while the other one never got beyond silk bleaching—because they used it in different ways. Now you had a gourd big enough to hold five piculs. Why didn't you think of making it into a great tub so you could go floating around the rivers and lakes, instead of worrying because it was too big and unwieldy to dip into things! Obviously you still have a lot of underbrush in your head!"

Huizi said to Zhuangzi, "I have a big tree called a *shu*. Its trunk is too gnarled and bumpy to apply a measuring line to, its branches too bent and twisty to match up to a compass or square. You could stand it by the road, and no carpenter would look at it twice. Your words, too, are big and useless, and so everyone alike spurns them!"

Zhuangzi said, "Maybe you've never seen a wildcat or a weasel. It crouches down and hides, watching for something to come along. It leaps and races east and west, not hesitating to go high or low—until it falls into the trap and dies in the net. Then again there's the yak, big as a cloud covering the sky. It certainly knows how to be big, though it doesn't know how to catch rats. Now you have this big tree, and you're distressed because it's useless. Why don't you plant it in Not-Even-Anything Village or the field of Broad-and-Boundless, relax and do nothing by its side, or lie down for a free and easy sleep under it? Axes will never shorten its life, nothing can ever harm it. If there's no use for it, how can it come to grief or pain?"

1. *Kun* means fish roe. So Zhuangzi begins with a paradox—the tiniest fish imaginable is also the largest fish imaginable.

2. Probably a reference to some seasonal shift in the tides or currents.

3. Identified variously as the name of a man or the name of a book. Probably Zhuangzi intended it as the latter and is poking fun at the philosophers of other schools who cite ancient texts to prove their assertions.

4. Said to have lived to an incredible old age. See p. 46, n. 12.

5. The text may be faulty at this point. The *Beishanlu*, a work written around 800 CE by the monk Shenqing, contains the following passage, said by a Tang commentator on the *Beishanlu* to be found in the *Zhuangzi* : "Tang asked Qi, 'Do up, down, and the four directions have a limit?' Qi replied, 'Beyond their limit lessness there is still another limitlessness.'" But whether this passage was in the original *Zhuangzi* or whether, if it was, it belongs at this point in the text, are questions that cannot be answered.

6. Referred to elsewhere in the literature of the period as Song Jian or Song Keng. According to the last section of the *Zhuangzi*, he taught a doctrine of social harmony, frugality, pacifism, and the rejection of conventional standards of honor and disgrace.

7. Lie Yukou, a Daoist philosopher frequently mentioned in the *Zhuangzi*. The *Liezi*, a work attributed to him, is of uncertain date and did not reach its present form until the third or fourth centuries CE.

8. Not three different categories but three names for the same thing.

9. Or following another interpretation, "the priest and the impersonator of the dead do not snatch his wine casks and chopping board away from him and take his place."

10. The logician Huizi who, as Waley pointed out, in the *Zhuangzi* "stands for intellectuality as opposed to imagination."

11. Because the salve, by preventing the soldiers' hands from chapping, made it easier for them to handle their weapons.

2

DISCUSSION ON MAKING ALL THINGS EQUAL

Ziqi of South Wall sat leaning on his armrest, staring up at the sky and breathing—vacant and far away, as though he'd lost his companion.[1] Yan Cheng Ziyou, who was standing by his side in attendance, said, "What is this? Can you really make the body like a withered tree and the mind like dead ashes? The man leaning on the armrest now is not the one who leaned on it before!"

Ziqi said, "You do well to ask the question, Yan. Now I have lost myself. Do you understand that? You hear the piping of men, but you haven't heard the piping of earth. Or if you've heard the piping of earth, you haven't heard the piping of Heaven!"

Ziyou, "May I venture to ask what this means?"

Ziqi said, "The Great Clod belches out breath, and its name is wind. So long as it doesn't come forth, nothing happens. But when it does, then ten thousand hollows begin crying wildly. Can't you hear them, long drawn out? In the mountain forests that lash and sway, there are huge trees a hundred spans around with hollows and openings like noses, like mouths, like ears, like jugs, like cups, like mortars, like rifts, like ruts. They roar like waves, whistle like arrows, screech, gasp, cry, wail, moan, and howl, those in the lead calling out *yeee!*, those behind calling out *yuuu!* In a gentle breeze they answer faintly, but in a full gale the chorus is gigantic. And when the fierce wind has passed on, then all the hollows are empty again. Have you never seen the tossing and trembling that goes on?"

Ziyou said, "By the piping of earth, then, you mean simply [the sound of] these hollows, and by the piping of man, [the sound of] flutes and whistles. But may I ask about the piping of Heaven?"

Ziqi said, "Blowing on the ten thousand things in a different way, so that each can be itself—all take what they want for themselves, but who does the sounding?"[2]

Great understanding is broad and unhurried; little understanding is cramped and busy. Great words are clear and limpid;[3] little words are shrill and quarrelsome. In sleep, men's spirits go visiting; in waking hours, their bodies hustle. With everything they meet they become entangled. Day after day they use their minds in strife, sometimes grandiose, sometimes sly, sometimes petty. Their little fears are mean and trembly; their great fears are stunned and overwhelming. They bound off like an arrow or a crossbow pellet, certain that they are the arbiters of right and wrong. They cling to their position as though they had sworn before the gods, sure that they are holding on to victory. They fade like fall and winter—such is the way they dwindle day by day. They drown in what they do—you

cannot make them turn back. They grow dark, as though sealed with seals—such are the excesses of their old age. And when their minds draw near to death, nothing can restore them to the light.

Joy, anger, grief, delight, worry, regret, fickleness, inflexibility, modesty, willfulness, candor, insolence—music from empty holes, mushrooms springing up in dampness, day and night replacing each other before us, and no one knows where they sprout from. Let it be! Let it be! [It is enough that] morning and evening we have them, and they are the means by which we live. Without them, we would not exist; without us, they would have nothing to take hold of. This comes close to the matter. But I do not know what makes them the way they are. It would seem as though they have some True Master, and yet I find no trace of him. He can act—that is certain. Yet I cannot see his form. He has identity but no form.

The hundred joints, the nine openings, the six organs, all come together and exist here [as my body]. But which part should I feel closest to? I should delight in all parts, you say? But there must be one I ought to favor more. If not, are they all of them mere servants? But if they all are servants, then how can they keep order among themselves? Or do they take turns being lord and servant? It would seem as though there must be some True Lord among them. But whether or not I succeed in discovering his identity, it neither adds to nor detracts from his Truth.

Once a man receives this fixed bodily form, he holds on to it, waiting for the end. Sometimes clashing with things, sometimes bending before them, he runs his course like a galloping steed, and nothing can stop him. Is he not pathetic? Sweating and laboring to the end of his days and never seeing his accomplishment, utterly exhausting himself and never knowing where to look for rest—can you help pitying him? I'm not dead yet! he says, but what good is that? His body decays, his mind follows it—can you deny that this is a great sorrow? Man's life has always been a muddle like this. How could I be the only muddled one, and other men not muddled?

If a man follows the mind given him and makes it his teacher, then who can be without a teacher? Why must you comprehend the process of change and form your mind on that basis before you can have a teacher? Even an idiot has his teacher. But to fail to abide by this mind and still insist on your rights and wrongs—this is like saying that you set off for Yue today and got there yesterday.[4] This is to claim that what doesn't exist exists. If you claim that what doesn't exist exists, then even the holy sage Yu couldn't understand you, much less a person like me!

Words are not just wind. Words have something to say. But if what they have to say is not fixed, then do they really say something? Or do they say nothing? People suppose that words are different from the peeps of baby birds, but is there any difference, or isn't there? What does the Way rely on,[5] that we have true and false? What do words rely on, that we have right and wrong? How can the Way go away and not exist? How can words exist and not be acceptable? When the Way relies on little accomplishments and words rely on vain show, then we have the rights and wrongs of the Confucians and the Mohists. What one

calls right, the other calls wrong; what one calls wrong, the other calls right. But if we want to right their wrongs and wrong their rights, then the best thing to use is clarity.

Everything has its "that," everything has its "this." From the point of view of "that," you cannot see it; but through understanding, you can know it. So I say, "that" comes out of "this," and "this" depends on "that"—which is to say that "this" and "that" give birth to each other. But where there is birth, there must be death; where there is death, there must be birth. Where there is acceptability, there must be unacceptability; where there is unacceptability, there must be acceptability. Where there is recognition of right, there must be recognition of wrong; where there is recognition of wrong, there must be recognition of right. Therefore the sage does not proceed in such a way but illuminates all in the light of Heaven.[6] He, too, recognizes a "this" but a "this" that is also "that," a "that" that is also "this." His "that" has both a right and a wrong in it; his "this," too, has both a right and a wrong in it. So, in fact, does he still have a "this" and "that"? Or does he, in fact, no longer have a "this" and "that"? A state in which "this" and "that" no longer find their opposites is called the hinge of the Way. When the hinge is fitted into the socket, it can respond endlessly. Its right, then, is a single endlessness, and its wrong, too, is a single endlessness. So I say, the best thing to use is clarity.

To use an attribute to show that attributes are not attributes is not as good as using a nonattribute to show that attributes are not attributes. To use a horse to show that a horse is not a horse is not as good as using a non-horse to show that a horse is not a horse;[7] Heaven and earth are one attribute; the ten thousand things are one horse.

What is acceptable we call acceptable; what is unacceptable we call unacceptable. A road is made by people walking on it; things are so because they are called so. What makes them so? Making them so makes them so. What makes them not so? Making them not so makes them not so. Things all must have that which is so; things all must have that which is acceptable. There is nothing that is not so, nothing that is not acceptable.

For this reason, whether you point to a little stalk or a great pillar, a leper or the beautiful Xishi, things ribald and shady, or things grotesque and strange, the Way makes them all into one. Their dividedness is their completeness; their completeness is their impairment. No thing is either complete or impaired, but all are made into one again. Only the man of far-reaching vision knows how to make them into one. So he has no use [for categories] but relegates all to the constant. The constant is the useful; the useful is the passable; the passable is the successful; and with success, all is accomplished. He relies on this alone, relies on it and does not know he is doing so. This is called the Way.

But to wear out your brain trying to make things into one without realizing that they are all the same—this is called "three in the morning." What do I mean by "three in the morning"? When the monkey trainer was handing out acorns, he said, "You get three in the morning and four at night." This made all the monkeys furious. "Well, then," he said, "you get four in the morning and three at night." The monkeys all were delighted. There was no change in the reality behind the words, and yet the monkeys responded with joy and anger. Let them, if they want to. So the sage harmonizes with both right and wrong and rests in Heaven the Equalizer. This is called walking two roads.

The understanding of the men of ancient times went a long way. How far did it go? To the point where some of them believed that things have never existed—so far, to the end, where nothing can be added. Those at the next stage thought that things exist but recognized no boundaries among them. Those at the next stage thought there were boundaries but recognized no right and wrong. Because right and wrong appeared, the Way was injured, and because the Way was injured, love became complete. But do such things as completion and injury really exist, or do they not?

There is such a thing as completion and injury—Mr. Zhao playing the lute is an example. There is such a thing as no completion and no injury—Mr. Zhao not playing the lute is an example.[8] Zhao Wen played the lute; Music Master Kuang waved his baton; Huizi leaned on his desk. The knowledge of these three was close to perfection. All were masters, and therefore their names have been handed down to later ages. Only in their likes were they different from him [the true sage]. What they liked, they tried to make clear. What he is not clear about, they tried to make clear, and so they ended in the foolishness of "hard" and "white."[9] Their sons, too, devoted all their lives to their fathers'[10] theories but, till their death, never reached any completion. Can these men be said to have attained completion? If so, then so have all the rest of us. Or can they not be said to have attained completion? If so, then neither we nor anything else has ever attained it.

The torch of chaos and doubt—this is what the sage steers by.[11] So he does not use things but relegates all to the constant. This is what it means to use clarity.

Now I am going to make a statement here. I don't know whether or not it fits into the category of other people's statements. But whether it fits into their category or whether it doesn't, it obviously fits into some category. So in that respect, it is no different from their statements. However, let me try making my statement.

There is a beginning. There is a not yet beginning to be a beginning. There is a not yet beginning to be a not yet beginning to be a beginning. There is being. There is nonbeing. There is a not yet beginning to be nonbeing. There is a not yet beginning to be a not yet beginning to be nonbeing. Suddenly there is being and nonbeing. But between this being and nonbeing, I don't really know which is being and which is nonbeing. Now I have just said something. But I don't know whether what I have said has really said something or whether it hasn't said something.

There is nothing in the world bigger than the tip of an autumn hair, and Mount Tai is little. No one has lived longer than a dead child, and Pengzu died young.[12] Heaven and earth were born at the same time I was, and the ten thousand things are one with me.

We have already become one, so how can I say anything? But I have just *said* that we are one, so how can I not be saying something? The one and what I said about it make two, and two and the original one make three. If we go on this way, then even the cleverest mathematician, much less an ordinary man, can't tell where we'll end. If by moving from nonbeing to being, we get to three, how far will we get if we move from being to being? Better not to move but to let things be!

The Way has never known boundaries; speech has no constancy. But because of [the recognition of a] "this," there came to be boundaries. Let me tell you what the boundaries are. There is left, there is right, there are theories, there are debates,[13] there are divisions, there are discriminations, there are emulations, and there are contentions. These are called the Eight Virtues.[14] As to what is beyond the Six Realms,[15] the sage admits it exists but does not theorize. As to what is within the Six Realms, he theorizes but does not debate. In the case of the *Spring and Autumn*,[16] the record of the former kings of past ages, the sage debates but does not discriminate. So [I say,] those who divide fail to divide; those who discriminate fail to discriminate. What does this mean, you ask? The sage embraces things. Ordinary men discriminate among them and parade their discriminations before others. So I say, those who discriminate fail to see.

The Great Way is not named; Great Discriminations are not spoken; Great Benevolence is not benevolent; Great Modesty is not humble; Great Daring does not attack. If the Way is made clear, it is not the Way. If discriminations are put into words, they do not suffice. If benevolence has a constant object, it cannot be universal.[17] If modesty is fastidious, it cannot be trusted. If daring attacks, it cannot be complete. These five all are round, but they tend toward the square.[18]

Therefore understanding that rests in what it does not understand is the finest. Who can understand discriminations that are not spoken, the Way that is not a way? If he can understand this, he may be called the Reservoir of Heaven. Pour into it and it is never full, dip from it and it never runs dry, and yet it does not know where the supply comes from. This is called the Shaded Light.[19]

So it is that long ago Yao said to Shun, "I want to attack the rulers of Zong, Kuai, and Xuao. Even as I sit on my throne, this thought nags at me. Why is this?"

Shun replied, "These three rulers are only little dwellers in the weeds and brush. Why this nagging desire? Long ago, ten suns came out all at once, and the ten thousand things were all lighted up. And how much greater is virtue than these suns!"[20]

Nie Que asked Wang Ni, "Do you know what all things agree in calling right?"

"How would I know that?" said Wang Ni.

"Do you know that you don't know it?"

"How would I know that?"

"Then do things know nothing?"

"How would I know that? However, suppose I try saying something. What way do I have of knowing that if I say I know something I don't really not know it? Or what way do I have of knowing that if I say I don't know something I don't really in fact know it? Now let me ask *you* some questions. If a man sleeps in a damp place, his back aches and he ends up half paralyzed, but is this true of a loach? If he lives in a tree, he is terrified and shakes with fright, but is this true of a monkey? Of these three creatures, then, which one knows the proper place to live? Men eat the flesh of grass-fed and grain-fed animals, deer eat grass, centipedes find snakes tasty, and hawks and falcons relish mice. Of these four, which

knows how food ought to taste? Monkeys pair with monkeys, deer go out with deer, and fish play around with fish. Men claim that Maoqiang and Lady Li were beautiful; but if fish saw them, they would dive to the bottom of the stream; if birds saw them, they would fly away; and if deer saw them, they would break into a run. Of these four, which knows how to fix the standard of beauty for the world? The way I see it, the rules of benevolence and righteousness and the paths of right and wrong all are hopelessly snarled and jumbled. How could I know anything about such dis criminations?"

Nie Que said, "If you don't know what is profitable or harmful, then does the Perfect Man likewise know nothing of such things?"

Wang Ni replied, "The Perfect Man is godlike. Though the great swamps blaze, they cannot burn him; though the great rivers freeze, they cannot chill him; though swift lightning splits the hills and howling gales shake the sea, they cannot frighten him. A man like this rides the clouds and mist, straddles the sun and moon, and wanders beyond the four seas. Even life and death have no effect on him, much less the rules of profit and loss!"

Ju Que said to Zhang Wuzi, "I have heard Confucius say that the sage does not work at anything, does not pursue profit, does not dodge harm, does not enjoy being sought after, does not follow the Way, says nothing yet says something, says something yet says nothing, and wanders beyond the dust and grime. Confucius himself regarded these as wild and flippant words, though I believe they describe the working of the mysterious Way. What do you think of them?"

Zhang Wuzi said, "Even the Yellow Emperor would be confused if he heard such words, so how could you expect Confucius to understand them? What's more, you're too hasty in your own appraisal. You see an egg and demand a crowing cock, see a crossbow pellet and demand a roast dove. I'm going to try speaking some reckless words, and I want you to listen to them recklessly. How will that be? The sage leans on the sun and moon, tucks the universe under his arm, merges himself with things, leaves the confusion and muddle as it is, and looks on slaves as exalted. Ordinary men strain and struggle; the sage is stupid and blockish. He takes part in ten thousand ages and achieves simplicity in oneness. For him, all the ten thousand things are what they are, and thus they enfold one another.

"How do I know that loving life is not a delusion? How do I know that in hating death I am not like a man who, having left home in his youth, has forgotten the way back?

"Lady Li was the daughter of the border guard of Ai.[21] When she was first taken captive and brought to the state of Jin, she wept until her tears drenched the collar of her robe. But later, when she went to live in the palace of the ruler, shared his couch with him, and ate the delicious meats of his table, she wondered why she had ever wept. How do I know that the dead do not wonder why they ever longed for life?

"He who dreams of drinking wine may weep when morning comes; he who dreams of weeping may in the morning go off to hunt. While he is dreaming, he does not know it is a dream, and in his dream, he may even try to interpret a dream. Only after he wakes does he know it was a dream. And someday there will be a great awakening when we know that

this is all a great dream. Yet the stupid believe they are awake, busily and brightly assuming they understand things, calling this man ruler, that one herdsman—how dense! Confucius and you both are dreaming! And when I say you are dreaming, I am dreaming, too. Words like these will be labeled the Supreme Swindle. Yet after ten thousand generations, a great sage may appear who will know their meaning, and it will still be as though he appeared with astonishing speed.

"Suppose you and I have had an argument. If you have beaten me instead of my beating you, then are you necessarily right, and am I necessarily wrong? If I have beaten you instead of your beating me, then am I necessarily right, and are you necessarily wrong? Is one of us right and the other wrong? Are both of us right, or are both of us wrong? If you and I don't know the answer, then other people are bound to be even more in the dark. Whom shall we get to decide what is right? Shall we get someone who agrees with you to decide? But if he already agrees with you, how can he decide fairly? Shall we get someone who agrees with me? But if he already agrees with me, how can he decide? Shall we get someone who disagrees with both of us? But if he already disagrees with both of us, how can he decide? Shall we get someone who agrees with both of us? But if he already agrees with both of us, how can he decide? Obviously, then, neither you nor I nor anyone else can know the answer. Shall we wait for still another person?

"But waiting for one shifting voice [to pass judgment on] another is the same as waiting for none of them.[22] Harmonize them all with the Heavenly Equality, leave them to their endless changes, and so live out your years. What do I mean by harmonizing them with the Heavenly Equality? Right is not right; so is not so. If right were really right, it would differ so clearly from not right that there would be no need for argument. If so were really so, it would differ so clearly from not so that there would be no need for argument. Forget the years; forget distinctions. Leap into the boundless and make it your home!"

Penumbra said to Shadow, "A little while ago you were walking, and now you're standing still; a little while ago you were sitting, and now you're standing up. Why this lack of independent action?"

Shadow said, "Do I have to wait for something before I can be like this? Does what I wait for also have to wait for something before it can be like this? Am I waiting for the scales of a snake or the wings of a cicada? How do I know why it is so? How do I know why it isn't so?"[23]

Once Zhuang Zhou dreamed he was a butterfly, a butterfly flitting and fluttering around, happy with himself and doing as he pleased. He didn't know he was Zhuang Zhou. Suddenly he woke up, and there he was, solid and unmistakable Zhuang Zhou. But he didn't know if he were Zhuang Zhou who had dreamed he was a butterfly or a butterfly dreaming he was Zhuang Zhou. Between Zhuang Zhou and a butterfly, there must be *some* distinction! This is called the Transformation of Things.

1. The word “companion” is interpreted variously to mean his associates, his wife, or his own body.

2. Heaven is not something distinct from earth and man, but a name applied to the natural and spontaneous functioning of the two.

3. Reading *dan* instead of *yan*.

4. According to the last section of the *Zhuangzi*, this was one of the paradoxes of the logician Huizi.

5. Following the interpretation of Zhang Binglin. The older interpretation of yin here and in the following sentences is, “What is the Way hidden by,” etc.

6. *Tian*, which for Zhuangzi means Nature or the Way.

7. A reference to the statements of the logician Gongsun Long, “A white horse is not a horse” and “Attributes are not attributes in and of themselves.”

8. Zhao Wen was a famous lute (*qin*) player. But the best music he could play (i.e., complete) was only a pale and partial reflection of the ideal music, which was thereby injured and impaired, just as the unity of the Way was injured by the appearance of love—that is, man’s likes and dis likes. Hence, when Mr. Zhao refrained from playing the lute, there was neither completion nor injury.

9. The logicians Huizi and Gongsun Long spent much time discussing the relationship between attributes such as “hard” and “white” and the thing to which they pertain.

10. Following Yu-lan Fung and Fukunaga, I read *fu* instead of *wen*.

11. He accepts things as they are, though to the ordinary person attempting to establish values, they appear chaotic and doubtful and in need of clarification.

12. The strands of animal fur were believed to grow particularly fine in autumn; hence “the tip of an autumn hair” is a cliché for something extremely tiny. Pengzu, the Chinese Methuselah, appeared on p. 2.

13. Following the reading in the Cui text.

14. Many commentators and translators try to give the word *de* some special meaning other than its ordinary one of “virtue” in this context. But I believe Zhuangzi is deliberately parodying the ethical categories of the Confucians and Mohists.

15. Heaven, earth, and the four directions, that is, the universe.

16. Perhaps a reference to the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, a history of the state of Lu said to have been compiled by Confucius. But it may be a generic term referring to the chronicles of the various feudal states.

17. Reading *zhou* instead of *cheng*.

18. All are originally perfect but may become “squared,” that is, impaired, by the misuses mentioned.

19. Or according to another interpretation, “the Precious Light.”

20. Here virtue is to be under stood in a good sense, as the power of the Way.

21. She was taken captive by Duke Xian of Jin in 671 BCE and later became his consort.

22. I follow the rearrangement of the text suggested by Lü Huiqing. But the text of this whole paragraph leaves much to be desired, and the translation is tentative.

23. That is, to ordinary men the shadow appears to depend on something else for its movement, just as the snake depends on its scales (according to Chinese belief) and the cicada on its wings. But do such causal views of action really have any meaning?

3

THE SECRET OF CARING FOR LIFE

Your life has a limit, but knowledge has none.[1] If you use what is limited to pursue what has no limit, you will be in danger. If you understand this and still strive for knowledge, you will be in danger for certain! If you do good, stay away from fame. If you do evil, stay away from punishments. Follow the middle; go by what is constant and you can stay in one piece, keep yourself alive, look after your parents, and live out your years.

Cook Ding was cutting up an ox for Lord Wenhui.[2] At every touch of his hand, every heave of his shoulder, every move of his feet, every thrust of his knee—zip! zoop! He slithered the knife along with a zing, and all was in perfect rhythm, as though he were performing the dance of the Mulberry Grove or keeping time to the Jingshou music.[3]

"Ah, this is marvelous!" said Lord Wenhui. "Imagine skill reaching such heights!"

Cook Ding laid down his knife and replied, "What I care about is the Way, which goes beyond skill. When I first began cutting up oxen, all I could see was the ox itself. After three years I no longer saw the whole ox. And now—now I go at it by spirit and don't look with my eyes. Perception and understanding have come to a stop, and spirit moves where it wants. I go along with the natural makeup, strike in the big hollows, guide the knife through the big openings, and follow things as they are. So I never touch the smallest ligament or tendon, much less a main joint.

"A good cook changes his knife once a year—because he cuts. A mediocre cook changes his knife once a month—because he hacks. I've had this knife of mine for nineteen years and I've cut up thousands of oxen with it, and yet the blade is as good as though it had just come from the grindstone. There are spaces between the joints, and the blade of the knife has really no thickness. If you insert what has no thickness into such spaces, then there's plenty of room—more than enough for the blade to play about in. That's why after nineteen years, the blade of my knife is still as good as when it first came from the grindstone.

"However, whenever I come to a complicated place, I size up the difficulties, tell myself to watch out and be careful, keep my eyes on what I'm doing, work very slowly, and move the knife with the greatest subtlety, until—flop! the whole thing comes apart like a clod of earth crumbling to the ground. I stand there holding the knife and look all around me, completely satisfied and reluctant to move on, and then I wipe off the knife and put it away."[4]

"Excellent!" said Lord Wenhui. "I have heard the words of Cook Ding and learned how to care for life!"

When Gongwen Xuan saw the Commander of the Right,[5] he was startled and said, "What kind of man is this? How did he come to lose his foot? Was it Heaven? Or was it man?"

"It was Heaven, not man," said the commander. "When Heaven gave me life, it saw to it that I would be one-footed. Men's looks are given to them. So I know this was the work of Heaven and not of man. The swamp pheasant has to walk ten paces for one peck and a hundred paces for one drink, but it doesn't want to be kept in a cage. Though you treat it like a king, its spirit won't be content."

When Lao Dan[6] died, Qin Shi went to mourn for him, but after giving three cries, he left the room.

"Weren't you a friend of the Master?" asked Laozi's disciples.

"Yes."

"And you think it's all right to mourn him this way?"

"Yes," said Qin Shi. "At first I took him for a real man, but now I know he wasn't. A little while ago, when I went in to mourn, I found old men weeping for him as though they were weeping for a son, and young men weeping for him as though they were weeping for a mother. To have gathered a group like *that*, he must have done something to make them talk about him, though he didn't ask them to talk or make them weep for him, though he didn't ask them to weep. This is to hide from Heaven, turn your back on the true state of affairs, and forget what you were born with. In the old days, this was called the crime of hiding from Heaven. Your master happened to come because it was his time, and he happened to leave because things follow along. If you are content with the time and willing to follow along, then grief and joy have no way to enter. In the old days, this was called being freed from the bonds of God.

"Though the grease burns out of the torch, the fire passes on, and no one knows where it ends."[7]

1. The chapter is very brief and would appear to be mutilated.

2. Identified as King Hui of Wei, who appeared on p. 5.

3. The Mulberry Grove is identified as a rain dance from the time of King Tang of the Shang dynasty, and the Jingshou music, as part of a longer composition from the time of Yao.

4. Waley (*Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China*, p. 73) takes this whole paragraph to refer to the working methods of a mediocre carver and hence translates it very differently. There is a great deal to be said for his interpretation, but after much consideration I have decided to follow the traditional interpretation because it seems to me that the extreme care

and caution that the cook uses when he comes to a difficult place is also a part of Zhuangzi's "secret of caring for life."

5. Probably the ex–Commander of the Right, as he has been punished by having one foot amputated, a common penalty in ancient China. It is mutilating punishments such as these that Zhuangzi has in mind when he talks about the need to "stay in one piece."

6. Laozi, the reputed author of the *Daodejing*.

7. The first part of this last sentence is scarcely intelligible, and there are numerous suggestions for how it should be interpreted or emended. I follow Zhu Guiyao in reading "grease" instead of "finger." For the sake of reference, I list some of the other possible interpretations as I understand them: "When the fingers complete the work of adding firewood, the fire passes on" (Guo Xiang); "Though the fingers are worn out gathering firewood, the fire passes on" (Yu Yue); "What we can point to are the fagots that have been consumed, but the fire is transmitted elsewhere" (Legge, Fukunaga).

4

IN THE WORLD OF MEN

Yan Hui went to see Confucius and asked permission to take a trip.[1]

"Where are you going?"

"I'm going to Wei."

"What will you do there?"

"I have heard that the ruler of Wei is very young. He acts in an independent manner, thinks little of how he rules his state, and fails to see his faults. It is nothing to him to lead his people into peril, and his dead are reckoned by swampfuls like so much grass.[2] His people have nowhere to turn. I have heard you say, Master, 'Leave the state that is well ordered and go to the state in chaos! At the doctor's gate are many sick men.' I want to use these words as my standard, in hopes that I can restore his state to health."

"Ah," said Confucius, "you will probably go and get yourself executed, that's all. The Way doesn't want things mixed in with it. When it becomes a mixture, it becomes many ways; with many ways, there is a lot of bustle; and where there is a lot of bustle, there is trouble—trouble that has no remedy! The Perfect Man of ancient times made sure that he had it in himself before he tried to give it to others. When you're not even sure what you've got in yourself, how do you have time to bother about what some tyrant is doing?

"Do you know what it is that destroys virtue and where wisdom comes from? Virtue is destroyed by fame, and wisdom comes out of wrangling. Fame is something to beat people down with, and wisdom is a device for wrangling. Both are evil weapons—not the sort of thing to bring you success. Though your virtue may be great and your good faith unassailable, if you do not understand men's spirits, though your fame may be wide and you do not strive with others, if you do not understand men's minds but instead appear before a tyrant and force him to listen to sermons on benevolence and righteousness, measures and standards—this is simply using other men's bad points to parade your own excellence. You will be called a plaguer of others. He who plagues others will be plagued in turn. You will probably be plagued by this man.

"And suppose he is the kind who actually delights in worthy men and hates the unworthy—then why does he need you to try to make him any different? You had best keep your advice to yourself! Kings and dukes always lord it over others and fight to win the argument. You will find your eyes growing dazed, your color changing, your mouth working to invent excuses, your attitude becoming more and more humble, until in your mind you end by supporting him. This is to pile fire on fire, to add water to water, and is

called ‘increasing the excessive.’ If you give in at the beginning, there will be no place to stop. Since your fervent advice is almost certain not to be believed, you are bound to die if you come into the presence of a tyrant.

“In ancient times Jie put Guan Longfeng to death, and Zhou put Prince Bi Gan to death. Both Guan Longfeng and Prince Bi Gan were scrupulous in their conduct, bent down to comfort and aid the common people, and used their positions as ministers to oppose their superiors. Therefore their rulers, Jie and Zhou, utilized their scrupulous conduct as a means to trap them, for they were too fond of good fame. In ancient times Yao attacked Congzhi and Xuao, and Yu attacked Youhu, and these states were left empty and unpeopled, their rulers cut down. It was because they employed their armies constantly and never ceased their search for gain. All were seekers of fame or gain—have you alone not heard of them? Even the sages cannot cope with men who are after fame or gain, much less a person like you!

“However, you must have some plan in mind. Come, tell me what it is.”

Yan Hui said, “If I am grave and empty-hearted, diligent and of one mind, won’t that do?”

“Goodness, how could *that* do? You may put on a fine outward show and seem very impressive, but you can’t avoid having an uncertain look on your face, anymore than an ordinary man can.[3] And then you try to gauge this man’s feelings and seek to influence his mind. But with him, what is called ‘the virtue that advances a little each day’ would not succeed, much less a great display of virtue! He will stick fast to his position and never be converted. Though he may make outward signs of agreement, inwardly he will not give it a thought! How could such an approach succeed?”

“Well then, suppose I am inwardly direct, outwardly compliant, and do my work through the examples of antiquity? By being inwardly direct, I can be the companion of Heaven. Being a companion of Heaven, I know that the Son of Heaven and I are equally the sons of Heaven. Then why would I use my words to try to get men to praise me or to try to get them not to praise me? A man like this, people call The Child. This is what I mean by being a companion of Heaven.

“By being outwardly compliant, I can be a companion of men. Lifting up the tablet, kneeling, bowing, crouching down—this is the etiquette of a minister. Everybody does it, so why shouldn’t I? If I do what other people do, they can hardly criticize me. This is what I mean by being a companion of men.

“By doing my work through the examples of antiquity, I can be the companion of ancient times. Though my words may in fact be lessons and reproaches, they belong to ancient times and not to me. In this way, though I may be blunt, I cannot be blamed. This is what I mean by being a companion of antiquity. If I go about it in this way, will it do?”

Confucius said, “Goodness, how could *that* do? You have too many policies and plans, and you haven’t seen what is needed. You will probably get off without incurring any blame, yes. But that will be as far as it goes. How do you think you can actually convert him? You are still making the mind[4] your teacher!”

Yan Hui said, “I have nothing more to offer. May I ask the proper way?”

"You must fast!" said Confucius. "I will tell you what that means. Do you think it is easy to do anything while you have a mind? If you do, Bright Heaven will not sanction you."

Yan Hui said, "My family is poor. I haven't drunk wine or eaten any strong foods for several months. So can I be considered as having fasted?"

"That is the fasting one does before a sacrifice, not the fasting of the mind."

"May I ask what the fasting of the mind is?"

Confucius said, "Make your will one! Don't listen with your ears, listen with your mind. No, don't listen with your mind, but listen with your spirit. Listening stops with the ears, the mind stops with recognition, but spirit is empty and waits for all things. The Way gathers in emptiness alone. Emptiness is the fasting of the mind."

Yan Hui said, "Before I heard this, I was certain that I was Hui. But now that I have heard it, there is no more Hui. Can this be called emptiness?"

"That's all there is to it," said Confucius. "Now I will tell you. You may go and play in his bird cage but never be moved by fame. If he listens, then sing; if not, keep still. Have no gate, no opening,[5] but make oneness your house and live with what cannot be avoided. Then you will be close to success.

"It is easy to keep from walking; the hard thing is to walk without touching the ground. It is easy to cheat when you work for men but hard to cheat when you work for Heaven. You have heard of flying with wings, but you have never heard of flying without wings. You have heard of the knowledge that knows, but you have never heard of the knowledge that does not know. Look into that closed room, the empty chamber where brightness is born! Fortune and blessing gather where there is stillness. But if you do not keep still—this is what is called sitting but racing around.[6] Let your ears and eyes communicate with what is inside and put mind and knowledge on the outside. Then even gods and spirits will come to dwell, not to speak of men! This is the changing of the ten thousand things, the bond of Yu and Shun, the constant practice of Fu Xi and Ji Qu.[7] How much more should it be a rule for lesser men!"

Zigao, duke of She,[8] who was being sent on a mission to Qi, consulted Confucius. "The king is sending me on a very important mission. Qi will probably treat me with great honor but will be in no hurry to do anything more. Even a commoner cannot be forced to act, much less one of the feudal lords. I am very worried about it. You once said to me, 'In all affairs, whether large or small, there are few men who reach a happy conclusion except through the Way. If you do not succeed, you are bound to suffer from the judgment of men. If you do succeed, you are bound to suffer from the yin and yang.[9] To suffer no harm whether or not you succeed—only the man who has virtue can do that.' I am a man who eats plain food that is simply cooked, so that no one ever complains of the heat in my kitchens.[10] Yet this morning I received my orders from the king and by evening I am gulping ice water—do you suppose I have developed some kind of internal fever? I have not even gone to Qi to see what the situation is like, and already I am suffering from the

yin and yang. And if I do not succeed, I am bound to suffer from the judgment of men. I will have both worries. As a minister, I am not capable of carrying out this mission. But perhaps you have some advice you can give me…."

Confucius said, "In the world, there are two great decrees: one is fate and the other is duty.[11] That a son should love his parents is fate—you cannot erase this from his heart. That a subject should serve his ruler is duty—there is no place he can go and be without his ruler, no place he can escape to between heaven and earth. These are called the great decrees. Therefore, to serve your parents and be content to follow them anywhere—this is the perfection of filial piety. To serve your ruler and be content to do anything for him—this is the peak of loyalty. And to serve your own mind so that sadness or joy does not sway or move it; to understand what you can do nothing about and to be content with it as with fate—this is the perfection of virtue. As a subject and a son, you are bound to find things you cannot avoid. If you act in accordance with the state of affairs and forget about yourself, then what leisure will you have to love life and hate death? Act in this way, and you will be all right.

"I want to tell you something else I have learned. In all human relations, if the two parties are living close to each other, they may form a bond through personal trust. But if they are far apart, they must use words to communicate their loyalty, and words must be transmitted by someone. To transmit words that are either pleasing to both parties or infuriating to both parties is one of the most difficult things in the world. When both parties are pleased, there must be some exaggeration of the good points; and when both parties are angered, there must be some exaggeration of the bad points. Anything that smacks of exaggeration is irresponsible. Where there is irresponsibility, no one will trust what is said, and when that happens, the man who is transmitting the words will be in danger. Therefore the aphorism says, 'Transmit the established facts; do not transmit words of exaggeration.' If you do that, you will probably come out all right.

"When men get together to pit their strength in games of skill, they start off in a light and friendly mood but usually end up in a dark and angry one, and if they go on too long, they start resorting to various underhanded tricks. When men meet at some ceremony to drink, they start off in an orderly manner but usually end up in disorder; and if they go on too long, they start indulging in various irregular amusements. It is the same with all things. What starts out being sincere usually ends up being deceitful. What was simple in the beginning acquires monstrous proportions in the end.

"Words are like wind and waves; actions are a matter of gain and loss. Wind and waves are easily moved; questions of gain and loss easily lead to danger. Hence anger arises from no other cause than clever words and one-sided speeches. When animals face death, they do not care what cries they make; their breath comes in gasps, and a wild fierceness is born in their hearts. [Men, too,] if you press them too hard, are bound to answer you with ill-natured hearts, though they do not know why they do so. If they themselves do not understand why they behave like this, then who knows where it will end?

"Therefore the aphorism says, 'Do not deviate from your orders; do not press for completion.' To go beyond the limit is excess; to deviate from orders or press for

completion is a dangerous thing. A good completion takes a long time; a bad completion cannot be changed later. Can you afford to be careless?

"Just go along with things and let your mind move freely. Resign yourself to what cannot be avoided and nourish what is within you—this is best. What more do you have to do to fulfill your mission? Nothing is as good as following orders (obeying fate)—that's how difficult it is!"[12]

Yan He, who had been appointed tutor to the crown prince, son of Duke Ling of Wei, went to consult Ju Boyu.[13] "Here is this man who by nature is lacking in virtue. If I let him go on with his unruliness, I will endanger the state. If I try to impose some rule on him, I will endanger myself. He knows enough to recognize the faults of others, but he doesn't know his own faults. What can I do with a man like this?"

"A very good question," said Ju Boyu. "Be careful, be on your guard, and make sure that you yourself are in the right! In your actions, it is best to follow along with him, and in your mind, it is best to harmonize with him. However, these two courses involve certain dangers. Though you follow along, you don't want to be pulled into his doings, and though you harmonize, you don't want to be drawn out too far. If in your actions you follow along to the extent of being pulled in with him, then you will be overthrown, destroyed, wiped out, and brought to your knees. If in your mind you harmonize to the extent of being drawn out, then you will be talked about, named, blamed, and condemned. If he wants to be a child, be a child with him. If he wants to follow erratic ways, follow erratic ways with him. If he wants to be reckless, be reckless with him. Understand him thoroughly, and lead him to the point where he is without fault.[14]

"Don't you know about the praying mantis that waved its arms angrily in front of an approaching carriage, unaware that it was incapable of stopping it? Such was the high opinion it had of its talents. Be careful, be on your guard! If you offend him by parading your store of talents, you will be in danger!

"Don't you know how the tiger trainer goes about it? He doesn't dare give the tiger any living thing to eat for fear it will learn the taste of fury by killing it. He doesn't dare give it any whole thing to eat for fear it will learn the taste of fury by tearing it apart. He gauges the state of the tiger's appetite and thoroughly understands its fierce disposition. Tigers are a different breed from men, and yet you can train them to be gentle with their keepers by following along with them. The men who get killed are the ones who go against them.

"The horse lover uses a fine box to catch the dung and a giant clam shell to catch the stale. But if a mosquito or a fly lights on the horse and he slaps it at the wrong time, then the horse will break the bit, hurt its head, and bang its chest. The horse lover tries to think of everything, but his affection leads him into error. Can you afford to be careless?"

Carpenter Shi went to Qi and, when he got to Crooked Shaft, he saw a serrate oak standing by the village shrine. It was broad enough to shelter several thousand oxen and measured a hundred spans around, towering above the hills. The lowest branches were eighty feet from the ground, and a dozen or so of them could have been made into boats. There were so

many sightseers that the place looked like a fair, but the carpenter didn't even glance around and went on his way without stopping. His apprentice stood staring for a long time and then ran after Carpenter Shi and said, "Since I first took up my ax and followed you, Master, I have never seen timber as beautiful as this. But you don't even bother to look, and go right on without stopping. Why is that?"

"Forget it—say no more!" said the carpenter. "It's a worthless tree! Make boats out of it and they'd sink; make coffins and they'd rot in no time; make vessels and they'd break at once. Use it for doors and it would sweat sap like pine; use it for posts and the worms would eat them up. It's not a timber tree—there's nothing it can be used for. That's how it got to be that old!"

After Carpenter Shi had returned home, the oak tree appeared to him in a dream and said, "What are you comparing me with? Are you comparing me with those useful trees? The cherry apple, the pear, the orange, the citron, the rest of those fructiferous trees and shrubs—as soon as their fruit is ripe, they are torn apart and subjected to abuse. Their big limbs are broken off, their little limbs are yanked around. Their utility makes life miserable for them, and so they don't get to finish out the years Heaven gave them but are cut off in mid-journey. They bring it on themselves—the pulling and tearing of the common mob. And it's the same way with all other things.

"As for me, I've been trying a long time to be of no use, and though I almost died, I've finally got it. This is of great use to me. If I had been of some use, would I ever have grown this large? Moreover, you and I are both of us things. What's the point of this—things condemning things? You, a worthless man about to die—how do you know I'm a worthless tree?"

When Carpenter Shi woke up, he reported his dream. His apprentice said, "If it's so intent on being of no use, what's it doing there at the village shrine?"[15]

"Shhh! Say no more! It's only *resting* there. If we carp and criticize, it will merely conclude that we don't understand it. Even if it weren't at the shrine, do you suppose it would be cut down? It protects itself in a different way from ordinary people. If you try to judge it by conventional standards, you'll be way off!"

Ziqi of Nanbo was wandering around the Hill of Shang when he saw a huge tree there, different from all the rest. A thousand teams of horses could have taken shelter under it, and its shade would have covered them all. Ziqi said, "What tree is this? It must certainly have some extraordinary usefulness!" But looking up, he saw that the smaller limbs were gnarled and twisted, unfit for beams or rafters, and looking down, he saw that the trunk was pitted and rotten and could not be used for coffins. He licked one of the leaves, and it blistered his mouth and made it sore. He sniffed the odor, and it was enough to make a man drunk for three days. "It turns out to be a completely unusable tree," said Ziqi, "and so it has been able to grow this big. Aha!—it is this unusableness that the Holy Man makes use of!"

The region of Jingshi in Song is fine for growing catalpas, cypresses, and mulberries. But those that are more than one or two arm lengths around are cut down for people who want monkey perches; those that are three or four spans around are cut down for the

ridgepoles of tall roofs;[16] and those that are seven or eight spans are cut down for the families of nobles or rich merchants who want side boards for coffins. So they never get to live out the years Heaven gave them but are cut down in mid-journey by axes. This is the danger of being usable. In the Jie sacrifice,[17] oxen with white foreheads, pigs with turned-up snouts, and men with piles cannot be offered to the river. This is something all the shamans know, and hence they consider them inauspicious creatures. But the Holy Man, for the same reason, considers them highly auspicious.

There's Crippled Shu—chin stuck down in his navel, shoulders up above his head, pigtail pointing at the sky, his five organs on the top, his two thighs pressing his ribs. By sewing and washing, he gets enough to fill his mouth; by handling a winnow and sifting out the good grain, he makes enough to feed ten people. When the authorities call out the troops, he stands in the crowd waving goodbye; when they get up a big work party, they pass him over because he's a chronic invalid. And when they are doling out grain to the ailing, he gets three big measures and ten bundles of firewood. With a crippled body, he's still able to look after himself and finish out the years Heaven gave him. How much better, then, if he had crippled virtue!

When Confucius visited Chu, Jie Yu, the madman of Chu, wandered by his gate crying, "Phoenix, phoenix, how has virtue failed! The future you cannot wait for; the past you cannot pursue. When the world has the Way, the sage succeeds; when the world is without the Way, the sage survives. In times like the present, we do well to escape penalty. Good fortune is as light as a feather, but nobody knows how to pick it up. Misfortune is as heavy as the earth, but nobody knows how to stay out of its way. Leave off, leave off—this teaching men virtue! Dangerous, dangerous—to mark off the ground and run! Fool, fool—don't spoil my walking! I walk a crooked way—don't step on my feet. The mountain trees do themselves harm; the grease in the torch burns itself up. The cinnamon can be eaten, and so it gets cut down; the lacquer tree can be used, and so it gets hacked apart. All men know the use of the useful, but nobody knows the use of the useless!"[18]

1. Yan Hui was Confucius's favorite disciple. Throughout this chapter Zhuangzi refers to a number of historical figures, many of whom appear in the *Analects*, though the speeches and anecdotes that he invents for them have nothing to do with history.

2. Omitting the *guo*, following Xi Tong. But there are many other interpretations of this peculiar sentence.

3. I follow Ma Xulun in taking this sentence to refer to Yan Hui. The older interpretation of Guo Xiang takes it to mean: "He [the ruler of Wei] puts on a fine outward show and is very overbearing; his expression is never fixed, and ordinary men do not try to oppose him."

4. Not the natural or "given" mind but the mind that makes artificial distinctions.

5. Following Zhang Binglin, I read *dou* instead of *du*.

6. The body sits, but the mind continues to race.

7. Mythical sage rulers.

8. A high minister of Chu and a relative of the king.

9. The excitement and worry of success will upset the balance of the yin and yang within the body and bring about sickness.

10. The latter part of the sentence is barely intelligible and the translation tentative. Legge's interpretation is ingenious though strained: "In my diet I take what is coarse, and do not seek delicacies,—a man whose cookery does not require him to be using cooling drinks."

11. *Yi*, elsewhere translated as "righteousness."

12. The phrase *zhiming* can be interpreted as either "following orders" or "obeying fate," and both meanings are almost certainly intended. Since for Zhuangzi, obeying fate is an extremely easy thing to do, the last part of the sentence is ironic. Throughout this passage Confucius, while appearing to give advice on how to carry out a diplomatic mission, is in fact enunciating Zhuangzi's code for successful behavior in general.

13. Yan He was a scholar of Lu, Ju Boyu a minister of Wei. The crown prince is the notorious Kuaikui, who was forced to flee from Wei because he plotted to kill his mother. He reentered the state and seized the throne from his son in 481 BCE.

14. Waley (*Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China*, p. 109) translates, "And if you probe him, do so in a part where his skin is not sore," taking the verb *da*, which I have translated as "understand thoroughly," to refer to acupuncture.

15. The shrine, or altar of the soil, was always situated in a grove of beautiful trees. So the oak was serving a purpose by lending an air of sanctity to the spot.

16. Following Ma Xulun, I read *mian* (roof) in place of *ming*.

17. Probably a spring sacrifice for the "dispelling (*jie*) of sins," though there are other interpretations. Sacrifices of animals, and sometimes human beings, were made to the Lord of the River, the god of the Yellow River.

18. Zhuangzi bases this passage on the somewhat similar anecdote and song of the madman Jie Yu in *Analects* XVIII, 5.

5

THE SIGN OF VIRTUE COMPLETE

In Lu there was a man named Wang Tai who had had his foot cut off.[1] He had as many followers gathered around him as Confucius.

Chang Ji asked Confucius, “This Wang Tai who’s lost a foot—how does he get to divide up Lu with you, Master, and make half of it his disciples? He doesn’t stand up and teach, he doesn’t sit down and discuss, yet they go to him empty and come home full. Does he really have some wordless teaching, some formless way of bringing the mind to completion? What sort of man is he?”

Confucius said, “This gentleman is a sage. It’s just that I’ve been tardy and haven’t gone to see him yet. But if I go to him as my teacher, how much more should those who are not my equals! Why only the state of Lu? I’ll bring the whole world along, and we’ll all become his followers!”

Chang Ji said, “If he’s lost a foot and is still superior to the Master, then how far above the common run of men he must be! But if that’s so, then what unique way does he have of using his mind?”

Confucius said, “Life and death are great affairs, and yet they are no change to him. Though heaven and earth flop over and fall down, it is no loss to him. He sees clearly into what has no falsehood and does not shift with things. He takes it as fate that things should change, and he holds fast to the source.”

“What do you mean by that?” asked Chang Ji.

Confucius said, “If you look at them from the point of view of their differences, then there is liver and gall, Chu and Yue. But if you look at them from the point of view of their sameness, then the ten thousand things all are one. A man like this doesn’t know what his ears or eyes should approve—he lets his mind play in the harmony of virtue. As for things, he sees them as one and does not see their loss. He regards the loss of a foot as a lump of earth thrown away.”

Chang Ji said, “In the way he goes about it, he uses his knowledge to get at his mind and uses his mind to get at the constant mind. Why should things gather around *him*?”

Confucius said, “Men do not mirror themselves in running water—they mirror themselves in still water. Only what is still can still the stillness of other things. Of those that receive life from the earth, the pine and cypress alone are best—they stay as green as ever in winter or summer. Of those that receive life from Heaven, Yao and Shun alone are best—they stand at the head of the ten thousand things. Luckily they were able to order

their lives and thereby order the lives of other things. Proof that a man is holding fast to the beginning lies in the fact of his fearlessness. A brave soldier will plunge alone into the midst of nine armies. He seeks fame and can bring himself to this. How much more, then, is possible for a man who governs Heaven and earth, stores up the ten thousand things, lets the six parts of his body[2] be only a dwelling, makes ornaments of his ears and eyes, unifies the knowledge of what he knows, and in his mind never tastes death. He will soon choose the day and ascend far off. Men may become his followers, but how could he be willing to bother himself about things?"

Shentu Jia, who had lost a foot, was studying under Bohun Wuren, along with Zichan of Zheng.[3] Zichan said to Shentu Jia, "If I go out first, you stay behind, and if you go out first, I'll stay behind."

Next day the two of them were again sitting on the same mat in the same hall. Zichan said to Shentu Jia, "If I go out first, you stay behind, and if you go out first, I'll stay behind! Now I will go out. Are you going to stay behind, or aren't you? When you see a prime minister, you don't even get out of the way—do you think you're the equal of a prime minister?"

Shentu Jia said, "Within the gates of the Master, is there any such thing as a prime minister? You take delight in being a prime minister and pushing people behind you. But I've heard that if the mirror is bright, no dust will settle on it; if dust settles, it isn't really bright. When you live around worthy men a long time, you'll be free of faults. You regard the Master as a great man, and yet you talk like this—it's not right, is it?"

Zichan said, "You, a man like this—and still you claim to be better than a Yao! Take a look at your virtue and see if it's not enough to give you cause to reflect!"

Shentu Jia said, "People who excuse their faults and claim they didn't deserve to be punished—there are lots of them. But those who don't excuse their faults and who admit they didn't deserve to be spared—they are few. To know what you can't do anything about and to be content with it as you would with fate—only a man of virtue can do that. If you play around in front of Archer Yi's target, you're right in the way of the arrows, and if you don't get hit, it's a matter of fate. There are lots of men with two feet who laugh at me for having only one. It makes me boil with rage, but I come here to the Master's place, and I feel calmed down again and go home. I don't know whether he washes me clean with goodness or whether I come to understand things by myself. The Master and I have been friends for nineteen years, and he's never once let on that he's aware I'm missing a foot. Now you and I are supposed to be wandering outside the realm of forms and bodies, and you come looking for me inside it[4]—you're at fault, aren't you?"

Zichan squirmed, changed his expression, and put a different look on his face. "Say no more about it," he said.

In Lu there was a man named Shushan No-Toes who had had his foot cut off. Stumping along, he went to see Confucius.

“You weren’t careful enough!” said Confucius. “Since you’ve already broken the law and gotten yourself into trouble like this, what do you expect to gain by coming to me now?”

No-Toes said, “I just didn’t understand my duty and was too careless of my body, and so I lost a foot. But I’ve come now because I still have something that is worth more than a foot and I want to try to hold on to it. There is nothing that heaven doesn’t cover, nothing that earth doesn’t bear up. I supposed, Master, that you would be like heaven and earth. How did I know you would act like this?”

“It was stupid of me,” said Confucius. “Please, sir, won’t you come in? I’d like to describe to you what I have learned.”

But No-Toes went out.

Confucius said, “Be diligent, my disciples! Here is No-Toes, a man who has had his foot cut off, and still he’s striving to learn so he can make up for the evil of his former conduct. How much more, then, should men whose virtue is still unimpaired!”

No-Toes told the story to Lao Dan. “Confucius certainly hasn’t reached the stage of a Perfect Man, has he? What does he mean coming around so obsequiously to study with you?[5] He is after the sham illusion of fame and reputation and doesn’t know that the Perfect Man looks on these as so many handcuffs and fetters!”

Lao Dan said, “Why don’t you just make him see that life and death are the same story, that acceptable and unacceptable are on a single string? Wouldn’t it be good to free him from his handcuffs and fetters?”

No-Toes said, “When Heaven has punished him, how can you set him free?”

Duke Ai of Lu said to Confucius, “In Wei there was an ugly man named Ai Taituo. But when men were around him, they thought only of him and couldn’t break away, and when women saw him, they ran begging to their fathers and mothers, saying, ‘I’d rather be this gentleman’s concubine than another man’s wife!’—there were more than ten such cases, and it hasn’t stopped yet. No one ever heard him take the lead—he always just chimed in with other people. He wasn’t in the position of a ruler in which he could save men’s lives, and he had no store of provisions to fill men’s bellies. On top of that, he was ugly enough to astound the whole world, chimed in but never led, and knew no more than what went on right around him. And yet men and women flocked to him. He certainly must be different from other men, I thought, and I summoned him so I could have a look. Just as they said—he was ugly enough to astound the world. But he hadn’t been with me more than a month or so when I began to realize what kind of man he was, and before the year was out, I really trusted him. There was no one in the state to act as chief minister, and I wanted to hand over the government to him. He was vague about giving an answer, evasive, as though he hoped to be let off, and I was embarrassed, but in the end I turned the state over to him. Then, before I knew it, he left me and went away. I felt completely crushed, as though I’d suffered a loss and didn’t have anyone left to enjoy my state with. What kind of man is he, anyway?”

Confucius said, “I once went on a mission to Chu, and as I was going along, I saw some little pigs nursing at the body of their dead mother. After a while, they gave a start, and all

ran away and left her because they could no longer see their likeness in her; she was not the same. In loving their mother, they loved not her body but the thing that moved her body. When a man has been killed in battle and people come to bury him, he has no use for his medals. When a man has had his feet amputated, he doesn't care much about shoes. For both, the thing that is basic no longer exists. When women are selected to be consorts of the Son of Heaven, their nails are not pared and their ears are not pierced. When a man has just taken a wife, he is kept in posts outside [the palace] and is no longer sent on [dangerous] missions.[6] If so much care is taken to keep the body whole, how much more in the case of a man whose virtue is whole? Now Ai Taituo says nothing and is trusted, accomplishes nothing and is loved, so that people want to turn over their states to him and are afraid only that he won't accept. It must be that his powers are whole, though his virtue takes no form."

"What do you mean when you say his powers are whole?" asked Duke Ai.

Confucius said, "Life, death, preservation, loss, failure, success, poverty, riches, worthiness, unworthiness, slander, fame, hunger, thirst, cold, heat—these are the alternations of the world, the workings of fate. Day and night they change place before us, and wisdom cannot spy out their source. Therefore, they should not be enough to destroy your harmony; they should not be allowed to enter the storehouse of spirit. If you can harmonize and delight in them, master them and never be at a loss for joy; if you can do this day and night without break and make it be spring with everything, mingling with all and creating the moment within your own mind—this is what I call being whole in power."

"What do you mean when you say his virtue takes no form?"

"Among level things, water at rest is the most perfect, and therefore it can serve as a standard. It guards what is inside and shows no movement outside. Virtue is the establishment of perfect harmony. Though virtue takes no form, things cannot break away from it."

Some days later, Duke Ai reported his conversation to Min Zi.[7] "At first, when I faced south and became ruler of the realm, I tried to look after the regulation of the people and worried that they might die. I really thought I understood things perfectly. But now that I've heard the words of a Perfect Man, I'm afraid there was nothing to my understanding—I was thinking too little of my own welfare and ruining the state. Confucius and I are not subject and ruler—we are friends in virtue, that's all."

* * *

Mr. Lame-Hunchback-No-Lips talked to Duke Ling of Wei, and Duke Ling was so pleased with him that when he looked at normal men, he thought their necks looked too lean and skinny.[8] Mr. Pitcher-Sized-Wen talked to Duke Huan of Qi, and Duke Huan was so pleased with him that when he looked at normal men, he thought their necks looked too lean and skinny. Therefore, if virtue is preeminent, the body will be forgotten. But when men do not forget what can be forgotten but forget what cannot be forgotten—that may be called true forgetting.

So the sage has his wanderings. For him, knowledge is an offshoot, promises are glue, favors are a patching up, and skill is a peddler. The sage hatches no schemes, so what use has he for knowledge? He does no carving, so what use has he for glue? He suffers no loss, so what use has he for favors? He hawks no goods, so what use has he for peddling? These four are called Heavenly Gruel. Heavenly Gruel is the food of Heaven, and if he's already gotten food from Heaven, what use does he have for men? He has the form of a man but not the feelings of a man. Since he has the form of a man, he bands together with other men. Since he doesn't have the feelings of a man, right and wrong cannot get at him. Puny and small, he sticks with the rest of men. Massive and great, he perfects his Heaven alone.

Huizi said to Zhuangzi, "Can a man really be without feelings?"

Zhuangzi: "Yes."

Huizi: "But a man who has no feelings—how can you call him a man?"

Zhuangzi: "The Way gave him a face; Heaven gave him a form—why can't you call him a man?"

Huizi: "But if you've already called him a man, how can he be without feelings?"

Zhuangzi: "That's not what I mean by feelings. When I talk about having no feelings, I mean that a man doesn't allow likes or dislikes to get in and do him harm. He just lets things be the way they are and doesn't try to help life along."

Huizi: "If he doesn't try to help life along, then how can he keep himself alive?"

Zhuangzi: "The Way gave him a face; Heaven gave him a form. He doesn't let likes or dislikes get in and do him harm. You, now—you treat your spirit like an outsider. You wear out your energy, leaning on a tree and moaning, slumping at your desk and dozing—Heaven picked out a body for you and you use it to gibber about 'hard' and 'white'!"[9]

1. As a penalty for some offense.

2. The legs, arms, head, and trunk.

3. Zichan (d. 522 BCE) was prime minister of the state of Zheng.

4. Following Wang Maohong's suggestion, I reverse the position of *nei* and *wai*.

5. The meaning is doubtful. I follow Guo Xiang in taking it to be a reference to the legend that Confucius went to Laozi for instruction.

6. The sentence is unclear. Another interpretation would be: "he is allowed to spend nights at home and is not required to sleep in the officials' dormitory."

7. A disciple of Confucius.

8. Originally the text probably had some other phrase at this point referring to the walk, back, or lips of normal men, which dropped out and was replaced by the phrase from the parallel sentence that follows.

9. On “hard” and “white,” see p. 12, n. 9. Zhuangzi’s description of Huizi is rhymed in the original.

6

THE GREAT AND VENERABLE TEACHER

He who knows what it is that Heaven does, and knows what it is that man does, has reached the peak. Knowing what it is that Heaven does, he lives with Heaven. Knowing what it is that man does, he uses the knowledge of what he knows to help out the knowledge of what he doesn't know and lives out the years that Heaven gave him without being cut off midway—this is the perfection of knowledge.

However, there is a difficulty. Knowledge must wait for something before it can be applicable, and that which it waits for is never certain. How, then, can I know that what I call Heaven is not really man and what I call man is not really Heaven? There must first be a True Man[1] before there can be true knowledge.

What do I mean by a True Man? The True Man of ancient times did not rebel against want, did not grow proud in plenty, and did not plan his affairs. A man like this could commit an error and not regret it, could meet with success and not make a show. A man like this could climb the high places and not be frightened, could enter the water and not get wet, could enter the fire and not get burned. His knowledge was able to climb all the way up to the Way like this.

The True Man of ancient times slept without dreaming and woke without care; he ate without savoring; and his breath came from deep inside. The True Man breathes with his heels; the mass of men breathe with their throats. Crushed and bound down, they gasp out their words as though they were retching. Deep in their passions and desires, they are shallow in the workings of Heaven.

The True Man of ancient times knew nothing of loving life, knew nothing of hating death. He emerged without delight; he went back in without a fuss. He came briskly, he went briskly, and that was all. He didn't forget where he began; he didn't try to find out where he would end. He received something and took pleasure in it; he forgot about it and handed it back again. This is what I call not using the mind to repel the Way, not using man to help out Heaven. This is what I call the True Man.

Since he is like this, his mind forgets;[2] his face is calm; his forehead is broad. He is chilly like autumn, balmy like spring, and his joy and anger prevail through the four seasons. He goes along with what is right for things, and no one knows his limit. Therefore, when the sage calls out the troops, he may overthrow nations, but he will not lose the hearts of the people. His bounty enriches ten thousand ages, but he has no love for men. Therefore he who delights in bringing success to things is not a sage; he who has

affections is not benevolent; he who looks for the right time is not a worthy man; he who cannot encompass both profit and loss is not a gentleman; he who thinks of conduct and fame and misleads himself is not a man of breeding; and he who destroys himself and is without truth is not a user of men. Those like Hu Buxie, Wu Guang, Bo Yi, Shu Qi, Ji Zi, Xu Yu, Ji Tuo, and Shentu Di—all of them slaved in the service of other men, took joy in bringing other men joy, but could not find joy in any joy of their own.[3]

This was the True Man of old: his bearing was lofty and did not crumble; he appeared to lack but accepted nothing; he was dignified in his correctness but not insistent; he was vast in his emptiness but not ostentatious. Mild and cheerful, he seemed to be happy; reluctant, he could not help doing certain things; annoyed, he let it show in his face; relaxed, he rested in his virtue. Tolerant,[4] he seemed to be part of the world; towering alone, he could be checked by nothing; withdrawn, he seemed to prefer to cut himself off; bemused, he forgot what he was going to say.[5]

He regarded penalties as the body, rites as the wings, wisdom as what is timely, virtue as what is reasonable. Because he regarded penalties as the body, he was benign in his killing. Because he regarded rites as the wings, he got along in the world. Because he regarded wisdom as what is timely, there were things that he could not keep from doing. Because he regarded virtue as what is reasonable, he was like a man with two feet who gets to the top of the hill. And yet people really believed that he worked hard to get there.[6]

Therefore his liking was one, and his not liking was one. His being one was one, and his not being one was one. In being one, he was acting as a companion of Heaven. In not being one, he was acting as a companion of man. When man and Heaven do not defeat each other, then we may be said to have the True Man.

Life and death are fated—constant as the succession of dark and dawn, a matter of Heaven. There are some things that man can do nothing about—all are a matter of the nature of creatures. If a man is willing to regard Heaven as a father and to love it, then how much more should he be willing to do for that which is even greater![7] If he is willing to regard the ruler as superior to himself and to die for him, then how much more should he be willing to do for the Truth!

When the springs dry up and the fish are left stranded on the ground, they spew one another with moisture and wet one another down with spit—but it would be much better if they could forget one another in the rivers and lakes. Instead of praising Yao and condemning Jie, it would be better to forget both of them and transform yourself with the Way.

The Great Clod burdens me with form, labors me with life, eases me in old age, and rests me in death. So if I think well of my life, for the same reason I must think well of my death.[8]

You hide your boat in the ravine and your fish net[9] in the swamp and tell yourself that they will be safe. But in the middle of the night, a strong man shoulders them and carries them off, and in your stupidity, you don’t know why it happened. You think you do right to hide little things in big ones, and yet they get away from you. But if you were to hide the

world in the world, so that nothing could get away, this would be the final reality of the constancy of things.

You have had the audacity to take on human form, and you are delighted. But the human form has ten thousand changes that never come to an end. Your joys, then, must be uncountable. Therefore, the sage wanders in the realm where things cannot get away from him, and all are preserved. He delights in early death; he delights in old age; he delights in the beginning; he delights in the end. If he can serve as a model for men, how much more so that which the ten thousand things are tied to and all changes alike wait for!

The Way has its reality and its signs but is without action or form. You can hand it down, but you cannot receive it; you can get it, but you cannot see it. It is its own source, its own root. Before Heaven and earth existed, it was there, firm from ancient times. It gave spirituality to the spirits and to God; it gave birth to Heaven and to earth. It exists beyond the highest point, and yet you cannot call it lofty; it exists beneath the limit of the six directions, and yet you cannot call it deep. It was born before Heaven and earth, and yet you cannot say it has been there for long; it is earlier than the earliest time, and yet you cannot call it old.

Xiwei got it and held up heaven and earth.[10] Fu Xi got it and entered into the mother of breath. The Big Dipper got it and from ancient times has never wavered. The Sun and Moon got it and from ancient times have never rested. Kanpi got it and entered Kunlun. Pingyi got it and wandered in the great river. Jian Wu got it and lived in the great mountain.[11] The Yellow Emperor got it and ascended to the cloudy heavens. Zhuan Xu got it and dwelled in the Dark Palace. Yuqiang got it and stood at the limit of the north. The Queen Mother of the West got it and took her seat on Shaoguang—nobody knows her beginning, nobody knows her end. Pengzu got it and lived from the age of Shun to the age of the Five Dictators.[12] Fu Yue got it and became minister to Wuding, who extended his rule over the whole world; then Fu Yue climbed up to the Eastern Governor, straddled the Winnowing Basket and the Tail, and took his place among the ranks of stars.[13]

Nanpo Zikui said to the Woman Crookback, “You are old in years, and yet your complexion is that of a child. Why is this?”

“I have heard the Way!”

“Can the Way be learned?” asked Nanpo Zikui.

“Goodness, how could that be? Anyway, you aren’t the man to do it. Now there’s Buliang Yi—he has the talent of a sage but not the Way of a sage, whereas I have the Way of a sage but not the talent of a sage. I thought I would try to teach him and see if I could really get anywhere near to making him a sage. It’s easier to explain the Way of a sage to someone who has the talent of a sage, you know. So I began explaining and kept at him for three days,[14] and after that he was able to put the world outside himself. When he had put the world outside himself, I kept at him for seven days more, and after that he was able to put things outside himself. When he had put things outside himself, I kept at him for nine days more, and after that he was able to put life outside himself. After he had put life outside himself, he was able to achieve the brightness of dawn, and when he had achieved

the brightness of dawn, he could see his own aloneness. After he had managed to see his own aloneness, he could do away with past and present, and after he had done away with past and present, he was able to enter where there is no life and no death. That which kills life does not die; that which gives life to life does not live.[15] This is the kind of thing it is: there's nothing it doesn't send off, nothing it doesn't welcome, nothing it doesn't destroy, nothing it doesn't complete. Its name is Peace-in-Strife. After the strife, it attains completion."

Nanpo Zikui asked, "Where did you happen to hear this?"

"I heard it from the son of Aided-by-Ink, and Aided-by-Ink heard it from the grandson of Repeated-Recitation, and the grandson of Repeated-Recitation heard it from Seeing-Brightly, and Seeing-Brightly heard it from Whispered-Agreement, and Whispered-Agreement heard it from Waiting-for-Use, and Waiting-for-Use heard it from Exclaimed-Wonder, and Exclaimed-Wonder heard it from Dark-Obscurity, and Dark-Obscurity heard it from Participation-in-Mystery, and Participation-in-Mystery heard it from Copy-the-Source!"[16]

Master Si, Master Yu, Master Li, and Master Lai were all four talking together. "Who can look on nonbeing as his head, on life as his back, and on death as his rump?" they said. "Who knows that life and death, existence and annihilation, are all a single body? I will be his friend!"

The four men looked at one another and smiled. There was no disagreement in their hearts, and so the four of them became friends.

All at once, Master Yu fell ill. Master Si went to ask how he was. "Amazing!" said Master Yu. "The Creator is making me all crookedy like this! My back sticks up like a hunchback, and my vital organs are on top of me. My chin is hidden in my navel, my shoulders are up above my head, and my pigtail points at the sky. It must be some dislocation of the yin and yang!"

Yet he seemed calm at heart and unconcerned. Dragging himself haltingly to the well, he looked at his reflection and said, "My, my! So the Creator is making me all crookedy like this!"

"Do you resent it?" asked Master Si.

"Why no, what would I resent? If the process continues, perhaps in time he'll transform my left arm into a rooster. In that case I'll keep watch during the night. Or perhaps in time he'll transform my right arm into a cross-bow pellet, and I'll shoot down an owl for roasting. Or perhaps in time he'll transform my buttocks into cartwheels. Then, with my spirit for a horse, I'll climb up and go for a ride. What need will I ever have for a carriage again?

"I received life because the time had come; I will lose it because the order of things passes on. Be content with this time and dwell in this order, and then neither sorrow nor joy can touch you. In ancient times this was called the 'freeing of the bound.' There are those who cannot free themselves because they are bound by things. But nothing can ever win against Heaven—that's the way it's always been. What would I have to resent?"

Suddenly Master Lai grew ill. Gasping and wheezing, he lay at the point of death. His wife and children gathered round in a circle and began to cry. Master Li, who had come to ask how he was, said, “Shoo! Get back! Don’t disturb the process of change!”

Then he leaned against the doorway and talked to Master Lai. “How marvelous the Creator is! What is he going to make out of you next? Where is he going to send you? Will he make you into a rat’s liver? Will he make you into a bug’s arm?”

Master Lai said, “A child, obeying his father and mother, goes wherever he is told, east or west, south or north. And the yin and yang—how much more are they to a man than father or mother! Now that they have brought me to the verge of death, if I should refuse to obey them, how perverse I would be! What fault is it of theirs? The Great Clod burdens me with form, labors me with life, eases me in old age, and rests me in death. So if I think well of my life, for the same reason I must think well of my death. When a skilled smith is casting metal, if the metal should leap up and say, ‘I insist on being made into a Moye!’[17] he would surely regard it as very inauspicious metal indeed. Now, having had the audacity to take on human form once, if I should say, ‘I don’t want to be anything but a man! Nothing but a man!’ the Creator would surely regard me as a most inauspicious sort of person. So now I think of heaven and earth as a great furnace, and the Creator as a skilled smith. Where could he send me that would not be all right? I will go off to sleep peacefully, and then with a start, I will wake up.”

Master Sanghu, Mengzi Fan, and Master Qinzhang, three friends, said to one another, “Who can join with others without joining with others? Who can do with others without doing with others? Who can climb up to heaven and wander in the mists, roam the infinite, and forget life forever and forever?” The three men looked at one another and smiled. There was no disagreement in their hearts, and so they became friends.

After some time had passed without event, Master Sanghu died. He had not yet been buried when Confucius, hearing of his death, sent Zigong to assist at the funeral. When Zigong arrived, he found one of the dead man’s friends weaving frames for silkworms, while the other strummed a lute. Joining their voices, they sang this song:

> Ah, Sanghu!
> Ah, Sanghu!
> You have gone back to your true form
> While we remain as men, O!

Zigong hastened forward and said, “May I be so bold as to ask what sort of ceremony this is—singing in the very presence of the corpse?”

The two men looked at each other and laughed. “What does this man know of the meaning of ceremony?” they said.

Zigong returned and reported to Confucius what had happened. “What sort of men are they, anyway?” he asked. “They pay no attention to proper behavior, disregard their personal appearance and, without so much as changing the expression on their faces, sing

in the very presence of the corpse! I can think of no name for them! What sort of men are they?"

"Such men as they," said Confucius, "wander beyond the realm; men like me wander within it. Beyond and within can never meet. It was stupid of me to send you to offer condolences. Even now they have joined with the Creator as men to wander in the single breath of heaven and earth. They look on life as a swelling tumor, a protruding wen, and on death as the draining of a sore or the bursting of a boil. To men such as these, how could there be any question of putting life first or death last? They borrow the forms of different creatures and house them in the same body. They forget liver and gall, cast aside ears and eyes, turning and revolving, ending and beginning again, unaware of where they start or finish. Idly they roam beyond the dust and dirt; they wander free and easy in the service of inaction. Why should they fret and fuss about the ceremonies of the vulgar world and make a display for the ears and eyes of the common herd?"

Zigong said, "Well then, Master, what is this 'realm' that you stick to?"

Confucius said, "I am one of those men punished by Heaven. Nevertheless, I will share with you what I have."

"Then may I ask about the realm?"[18] said Zigong.

Confucius said, "Fish thrive in water, man thrives in the Way. For those that thrive in water, dig a pond, and they will find nourishment enough. For those that thrive in the Way, don't bother about them, and their lives will be secure. So it is said, the fish forget one another in the rivers and lakes, and men forget one another in the arts of the Way."

Zigong said, "May I ask about the singular man?"

"The singular man is singular in comparison to other men, but a companion of Heaven. So it is said, the petty man of Heaven is a gentleman among men; the gentleman among men is the petty man of Heaven."

* * *

Yan Hui said to Confucius, "When Mengsun Cai's mother died, he wailed without shedding any tears; he did not grieve in his heart; and he conducted the funeral without any look of sorrow. He fell down on these three counts, and yet he is known all over the state of Lu for the excellent way he managed the funeral. Is it really possible to gain such a reputation when there are no facts to support it? I find it very peculiar indeed!"

Confucius said, "Mengsun did all there was to do. He was advanced beyond ordinary understanding, and he would have simplified things even more, but that wasn't practical. However, there is still a lot that he simplified. Mengsun doesn't know why he lives and doesn't know why he dies. He doesn't know why he should go ahead; he doesn't know why he should fall behind. In the process of change, he has become a thing [among other things], and he is merely waiting for some other change that he doesn't yet know about. Moreover, when he is changing, how does he know that he really is changing? And when he is not changing, how does he know that he hasn't already changed? You and I, now—we are dreaming and haven't waked up yet. But in his case, though something may startle his body, it won't injure his mind; though something may alarm the house [his spirit lives in],

his emotions will suffer no death. Mengsun alone has waked up. Men wail and so he wails, too—that's the reason he acts like this.

"What's more, we go around telling one another, I do this, I do that—but how do we know that this 'I' we talk about has any 'I' to it? You dream you're a bird and soar up into the sky; you dream you're a fish and dive down in the pool. But now when you tell me about it, I don't know whether you are awake or whether you are dreaming. Running around accusing others[19] is not as good as laughing, and enjoying a good laugh is not as good as going along with things. Be content to go along and forget about change, and then you can enter the mysterious oneness of Heaven."

* * *

Yi Erzi went to see Xu You.[20] Xu You said, "What kind of assistance has Yao been giving you?"

Yi Erzi said, "Yao told me, 'You must learn to practice benevolence and righteousness and to speak clearly about right and wrong!'"

"Then why come to see *me*?" said Xu You. "Yao has already tattooed you with benevolence and righteousness and cut off your nose with right and wrong.[21] Now how do you expect to go wandering in any faraway, carefree, and as-you-like-it paths?"

"That may be," said Yi Erzi. "But I would like, if I may, to wander in a little corner of them."

"Impossible!" said Xu You. "Eyes that are blind have no way to tell the loveliness of faces and features; eyes with no pupils have no way to tell the beauty of colored and embroidered silks."

Yi Erzi said, "Yes, but Wuzhuang forgot her beauty, Juliang forgot his strength, and the Yellow Emperor forgot his wisdom—all were content to be recast and remolded.[22] How do you know that the Creator will not wipe away my tattoo, stick my nose back on again, and let me ride on the process of completion and follow after you, Master?"

"Ah—we can never tell," said Xu You. "I will just speak to you about the general outline. This Teacher of mine, this Teacher of mine—he passes judgment on the ten thousand things, but he doesn't think himself righteous; his bounty extends to ten thousand generations, but he doesn't think himself benevolent. He is older than the highest antiquity, but he doesn't think himself long-lived; he covers heaven, bears up the earth, carves and fashions countless forms, but he doesn't think himself skilled. It is with him alone I wander."

Yan Hui said, "I'm improving!"

Confucius said, "What do you mean by that?"

"I've forgotten benevolence and righteousness!"

"That's good. But you still haven't got it."

Another day, the two met again, and Yan Hui said, "I'm improving!"

"What do you mean by that?"

"I've forgotten rites and music!"

"That's good. But you still haven't got it."

Another day, the two met again, and Yan Hui said, "I'm improving!"

"What do you mean by that?"

"I can sit down and forget everything!"

Confucius looked very startled and said, "What do you mean, sit down and forget everything?"

Yan Hui said, "I smash up my limbs and body, drive out perception and intellect, cast off form, do away with understanding, and make myself identical with the Great Thoroughfare. This is what I mean by sitting down and forgetting everything."

Confucius said, "If you're identical with it, you must have no more likes! If you've been transformed, you must have no more constancy! So you really are a worthy man after all![23] With your permission, I'd like to become your follower."

Master Yu and Master Sang were friends. Once, it rained incessantly for ten days. Master Yu said to himself, Master Sang is probably having a bad time, and he wrapped up some rice and took it for his friend to eat. When he got to Master Sang's gate, he heard something like singing or crying and someone striking a lute and saying:

> Father?
> Mother?
> Heaven?
> Man?

It was as though the voice would not hold out and the singer were rushing to get through the words.

Master Yu went inside and said, "What do you mean—singing a song like that!"

"I was pondering what it is that has brought me to this extremity, but I couldn't find the answer. My father and mother surely wouldn't wish this poverty on me. Heaven covers all without partiality; earth bears up all without partiality—heaven and earth surely wouldn't single me out to make me poor. I try to discover who is doing it, but I can't get the answer. Still, here I am—at the very extreme. It must be fate."

1. Another term for the Daoist sage, synonymous with the Perfect Man or the Holy Man.

2. Reading *wang* instead of *zhi* in accordance with Wang Maohong's suggestion.

3. According to legend, these were men who either tried to reform the conduct of others or made a show of guarding their own integrity. All either were killed or committed suicide.

4. Following the Cui text, which reads *guang*.

5. There are many different interpretations of the words used to describe the True Man in this paragraph. I have followed those adopted by Fukunaga.

6. As Fukunaga pointed out, this paragraph, which describes the Daoist sage as a ruler who employs penalties, rites, wisdom, and virtue, seems out of keeping with Zhuangzi's philosophy as expressed elsewhere. Fukunaga suggests that it is an addition by a writer of the third or second centuries BCE who was influenced by Legalist thought.

7. Since Zhuangzi elsewhere uses *Tian* or Heaven as a synonym of the Way, this passage has troubled commentators. Some would emend the order of the words to read "If a man is willing to regard his father as Heaven" or would substitute *ren* for *Tian*, that is, "If a man is willing to regard another man as his father."

8. Or perhaps the meaning is "So if it makes my life good, it must for the same reason make my death good."

9. Following Yu Yue's interpretation.

10. The figures in this paragraph all are deities or mythical beings, but the myths to which Zhuangzi refers are in many cases unknown, so that the translation is tentative in places.

11. Kanpi is the god of the mythical Kunlun Mountains of the west; Pingyi is the god of the Yellow River; and Jian Wu is the god of Mount Tai.

12. The Yellow Emperor and Zhuan Xu are legendary rulers. The Queen Mother of the West is an immortal spirit who lives in the far west. Yuqiang is a deity of the far north. Pengzu's life span as given here extends, by traditional dating, from the twenty-sixth to the seventh centuries BCE.

13. Fu Yue is frequently mentioned as a minister to the Shang ruler Wuding (traditional dates 1324–1266 BCE), but little is known of the legend that he ascended to the sky and became a star.

14. Following Wen Yiduo's suggestion, I reverse the position of *shou* and *gao*.

15. That is, that which transcends the categories of life and death can never be said to have lived or died; only that which recognizes the existence of such categories is subject to them.

16. Reading *nishi* instead of *yishi* for the last name. But these names are open to a variety of interpretations. The whole list, of course, is a parody of the filiations of the other schools of philosophy.

17. A famous sword of King Helü (r. 514–496 BCE) of Wu.

18. The word *fang*, which I have translated as "realm," may also mean "method" or "procedure," and Confucius's answer seems to stress this latter meaning.

19. Following Xi Tong, I read *ze* instead of *shi*, but the sentence is obscure and there are many interpretations.

20. A recluse of the time of Emperor Yao. He appeared on p. 3.

21. Tattooing and cutting off the nose were common punishments.

22. Judging from the context, Wuzhuang and Juliang must have been noted for their beauty and strength, respectively. Perhaps the former is the same as the beautiful Maoqiang mentioned on p. 15. All these persons forgot themselves in the Way and were remolded by the Creator.

23. Zhuangzi probably intends a humorous reference to Confucius's words in *Analects* VI, 9: "The Master said, 'What a worthy man was Hui!'"

7

FIT FOR EMPERORS AND KINGS

Nie Que was questioning Wang Ni. Four times he asked a question, and four times Wang Ni said he didn't know. Nie Que proceeded to hop around in great glee and went and told Master Puyi. Master Puyi said, "Are you just now finding *that* out?[1] The clansman Youyu was no match for the clansman Tai.[2] The clansman Youyu still held on to benevolence and worked to win men over. He won men over all right, but he never got out into [the realm of] 'notman.' The clansman Tai, now—he lay down peaceful and easy; he woke up wide-eyed and blank. Sometimes he thought he was a horse; sometimes he thought he was a cow. His understanding was truly trustworthy; his virtue was perfectly true. He never entered [the realm of] 'non-man.'"[3]

Jian Wu went to see the madman Jie Yu. Jie Yu said, "What was Zhong Shi telling you the other day?"[4]

Jian Wu said, "He told me that the ruler of men should devise his own principles, standards, ceremonies, and regulations, and then there will be no one who will fail to obey him and be transformed by them."

The madman Jie Yu said, "This is bogus virtue! To try to govern the world like this is like trying to walk the ocean, to drill through a river, or to make a mosquito shoulder a mountain! When the sage governs, does he govern what is on the *outside*? He makes sure of himself first, and then he acts. He makes absolutely certain that things can do what they are supposed to do, that is all. The bird flies high in the sky where it can escape the danger of stringed arrows. The field mouse burrows deep down under the sacred hill where it won't have to worry about men digging and smoking it out. Have you got less sense than these two little creatures?"

Tian Gen was wandering on the sunny side of Yin Mountain. When he reached the banks of the Liao River, he happened to meet a Nameless Man. He questioned the man, saying, "Please may I ask how to rule the world?"

The Nameless Man said, "Get away from me, you peasant! What kind of a dreary question is that! I'm just about to set off with the Creator. And if I get bored with that, then I'll ride on the Light-and-Lissome Bird out beyond the six directions, wandering in the village of Not-Even-Anything and living in the Broad-and-Borderless field. What

business[5] do you have coming with this talk of governing the world and disturbing my mind?"

But Tian Gen repeated his question. The Nameless Man said, "Let your mind wander in simplicity, blend your spirit with the vastness, follow along with things the way they are, and make no room for personal views—then the world will be governed."

Yangzi Ju[6] went to see Lao Dan and said, "Here is a man swift as an echo, strong as a beam, with a wonderfully clear understanding of the principles of things, studying the Way without ever letting up—a man like this could compare with an enlightened king, couldn't he?"

Lao Dan said, "In comparison with the sage, a man like this is a drudging slave, a craftsman bound to his calling, wearing out his body, grieving his mind. They say it is the beautiful markings of the tiger and the leopard that call out the hunters, the nimbleness of the monkey and the ability of the dog to catch rats[7] that make them end up chained. A man like this—how could he compare with an enlightened king?"

Yangzi Ju, much taken aback, said, "May I venture to ask about the government of the enlightened king?"

Lao Dan said, "The government of the enlightened king? His achievements blanket the world but appear not to be his own doing. His transforming influence touches the ten thousand things, but the people do not depend on him. With him there is no promotion or praise—he lets everything find its own enjoyment. He takes his stand on what cannot be fathomed and wanders where there is nothing at all."

In Zheng there was a shaman of the gods named Ji Xian. He could tell whether men would live or die, survive or perish, be fortunate or unfortunate, live a long time or die young, and he would predict the year, month, week,[8] and day as though he were a god himself. When the people of Zheng saw him, they dropped everything and ran out of his way. Liezi went to see him and was completely intoxicated. Returning, he said to Huzi,[9] "I used to think, Master, that your Way was perfect. But now I see there is something even higher!"

Huzi said, "I have already showed you all the outward forms, but I haven't yet showed you the substance—and do you really think you have mastered this Way of mine? There may be a flock of hens, but if there is no rooster, how can they lay fertile eggs? You take what you know of the Way and wave it in the face of the world, expecting to be believed! This is the reason men can see right through you. Try bringing your shaman along next time and letting him get a look at me."

The next day Liezi brought the shaman to see Huzi. When they had left the room, the shaman said, "I'm so sorry—your master is dying! There's no life left in him—he won't last the week. I saw something very strange—something like wet ashes!"

Liezi went back into the room, weeping and drenching the collar of his robe with tears, and reported this to Huzi.

Huzi said, "Just now I appeared to him with the Pattern of Earth—still and silent, nothing moving, nothing standing up. He probably saw in me the Workings of Virtue

Closed Off.[10] Try bringing him around again."

The next day the two came to see Huzi again, and when they had left the room, the shaman said to Liezi, "It certainly was lucky that your master met me! He's going to get better—he has all the signs of life! I could see the stirring of what had been closed off!"

Liezi went in and reported this to Huzi.

Huzi said, "Just now I appeared to him as Heaven and Earth—no name or substance to it, but still the workings, coming up from the heels. He probably saw in me the Workings of the Good One.[11] Try bringing him again."

The next day the two came to see Huzi again, and when they had left the room, the shaman said to Liezi, "Your master is never the *same*! I have no way to physiognomize him! If he will try to steady himself, then I will come and examine him again."

Liezi went in and reported this to Huzi.

Huzi said, "Just now I appeared to him as the Great Vastness Where Nothing Wins Out. He probably saw in me the Workings of the Balanced Breaths. Where the swirling waves[12] gather, there is an abyss; where the still waters gather, there is an abyss; where the running waters gather, there is an abyss. The abyss has nine names, and I have shown him three.[13] Try bringing him again."

The next day the two came to see Huzi again, but before the shaman had even come to a halt before Huzi, his wits left him and he fled.

"Run after him!" said Huzi, but though Liezi ran after him, he could not catch up. Returning, he reported to Huzi, "He's vanished! He's disappeared! I couldn't catch up with him."

Huzi said, "Just now I appeared to him as Not Yet Emerged from My Source. I came at him empty, wriggling and turning, not knowing anything about 'who' or 'what,' now dipping and bending, now flowing in waves—that's why he ran away."

After this, Liezi concluded that he had never really begun to learn anything.[14] He went home and, for three years, did not go out. He replaced his wife at the stove, fed the pigs as though he were feeding people, and showed no preferences in the things he did. He got rid of the carving and polishing and returned to plainness, letting his body stand alone like a clod. In the midst of entanglement he remained sealed, and in this oneness he ended his life.

Do not be an embodier for fame; do not be a storehouse of schemes; do not be an undertaker of projects; do not be a proprietor of wisdom. Embody to the fullest what has no end and wander where there is no trail. Hold on to all that you have received from Heaven, but do not think you have gotten anything. Be empty, that is all. The Perfect Man uses his mind like a mirror—going after nothing, welcoming nothing, responding but not storing. Therefore he can win out over things and not hurt himself.

The emperor of the South Sea was called Shu [Brief]; the emperor of the North Sea was called Hu [Sudden]; and the emperor of the central region was called Hundun [Chaos]. From time to time, Shu and Hu came together for a meeting in the territory of Hundun, and

Hundun treated them very generously. Shu and Hu discussed how they could repay his kindness. “All men,” they said, “have seven openings so they can see, hear, eat, and breathe. But Hundun alone doesn’t have any. Let’s trying boring him some!”

Every day they bored another hole, and on the seventh day Hundun died.

1. On Nie Que and Wang Ni, see pp. 14–15. Master Puyi is probably the same as Master Piyi, who appears elsewhere in the *Zhuangzi* as Wang Ni’s teacher. According to commentators, Nie Que’s delight came from the fact that he had finally realized that there are no answers to questions.

2. “The clansman Youyu” is the sage ruler Shun, the ideal of the Confucian philosophers. “The clansman Tai” is vaguely identified as a ruler of high antiquity.

3. The existence of a category “not-man” depends on the recognition of a category “man.” Shun could get no further than the category “man”; hence he never reached the realm of “not-man.” Tai, on the other hand, was able to transcend all such categories.

4. Jian Wu and Jie Yu appeared on p. 4. Nothing is known about Zhong Shi. I follow Yu Yue in taking *ri* to mean “the other day.”

5. I follow the traditional interpretation, though in fact no one has succeeded in determining the meaning of this character for certain. Other interpretations are “How do you have the leisure to come,” etc., or “What is this dream talk that you come with about governing the world,” etc.

6. Perhaps meant to be identified with the hedonist philosopher Yang Zhu.

7. Reading *liu* in accordance with the parallel passage in sec. 12.

8. The ancient ten-day week.

9. The Daoist philosopher Liezi appeared on p. 3. Huzi is his teacher.

10. Virtue here has the sense of vital force. Compare *Book of Changes*, *Xici* 2: “The Great Virtue of Heaven and Earth is called life.”

11. The language of this whole passage is, needless to say, deliberately mysterious. The term “Good One” may have some relation to the passage in the *Changes*, *Xici* 1: “The succession of the yin and yang is called the Way. What carries it on is goodness.”

12. Following Ma Xulun’s emendation and interpretation.

13. According to commentators, the three forms of the abyss in the order given here correspond to the third, first, and second of Huzi’s manifestations.

14. That is, he had reached the highest stage of understanding.

8

WEBBED TOES

Two toes webbed together, a sixth finger forking off—these come from the inborn nature but are excretions as far as Virtue is concerned.[1] Swelling tumors and protruding wens—these come from the body but are excretions as far as the inborn nature is concerned. Men over-nice in the ways of benevolence and righteousness try to put these into practice, even to line them up with the five vital organs![2] This is not the right approach to the Way and its Virtue. Therefore he who has two toes webbed together has grown a flap of useless flesh; he who has a sixth finger forking out of his hand has sprouted a useless digit; and he who imposes overnice ways, webs, and forked fingers on the original form of the five vital organs will become deluded and perverse in the practice of benevolence and righteousness, and overnice in the use of his hearing and sight. Thus he who is web toed in eyesight will be confused by the five colors, bewitched by patterns and designs, by the dazzling hues of blue and yellow, of embroidery and brocade—am I wrong? So we have Li Zhu.[3] He who is overnice in hearing will be confused by the five notes, bewitched by the six tones, by the sounds of metal and stone, strings and woodwinds, the *huangzhong* and *dalü* pitch pipes—am I wrong? So we have Music Master Kuang.[4] He who is fork fingered with benevolence will tear out the Virtue given him and stifle his inborn nature in order to seize fame and reputation, leading the world on with pipe and drum in the service of an unattainable ideal—am I wrong? So we have Zeng and Shih.[5] He who is web toed in argumentation will pile up bricks, knot the plumb line, apply the curve,[6] letting his mind wander in the realm of "hard" and "white," "likeness" and "difference," huffing and puffing away, lauding his useless words—am I wrong? So we have Yang and Mo.[7] All these men walk a way that is overnice, web toed, wide of the mark, fork fingered, not that which is the True Rightness of the world.

He who holds to True Rightness[8] does not lose the original form of his inborn nature. So for him, joined things are not webbed toes; things forking off are not superfluous fingers; the long is never too much; the short is never too little.[9] The duck's legs are short, but to stretch them out would worry him; the crane's legs are long, but to cut them down would make him sad. What is long by nature needs no cutting off; what is short by nature needs no stretching. That would be no way to get rid of worry. I wonder, then, whether

benevolence and righteousness are part of man's true form? Those benevolent men—how much worrying they do!

The man with two toes webbed together would weep if he tried to tear them apart; the man with a sixth finger on his hand would howl if he tried to gnaw it off. Of these two, one has more than the usual number; the other has less; but in worrying about it, they are identical. Nowadays the benevolent men of the age lift up weary eyes,[10] worrying over the ills of the world, while the men of no benevolence tear apart the original form of their inborn nature in their greed for eminence and wealth. Therefore I wonder whether benevolence and righteousness are really part of man's true form? From the Three Dynasties on down,[11] what a lot of fuss and hubbub they have made in the world!

If we must use curve and plumb line, compass and square, to make something right, this means cutting away its inborn nature; if we must use cords and knots, glue and lacquer, to make something firm, this means violating its natural Virtue. So the crouchings and bendings of rights and music, the smiles and beaming looks of benevolence and righteousness, which are intended to comfort the hearts of the world, in fact destroy their constant naturalness.

For in the world, there can be constant naturalness. Where there is constant naturalness, things are arced not by the use of the curve, straightened not by the use of the plumb line, rounded not by the compasses, squared not by T squares, joined not by glue and lacquer, bound not by ropes and lines. Then all things in the world, simple and compliant, live and never know how they happen to live; all things, rude and unwitting,[12] get what they need and never know how they happen to get it. Past and present, it has been the same; nothing can do injury to this [principle]. Why, then, come with benevolence and righteousness, that tangle and train of glue and lacquer, ropes and lines, and try to wander in the realm of the Way and its Virtue? You will only confuse the world!

A little confusion can alter the sense of direction; a great confusion can alter the inborn nature. How do I know this is so? Ever since that man of the Yu clan[13] began preaching benevolence and righteousness and stirring up the world, all the men in the world have dashed headlong for benevolence and righteousness. This is because benevolence and righteousness have altered their inborn nature, is it not?

Let me try explaining what I mean. From the Three Dynasties on down, everyone in the world has altered his inborn nature because of some [external] thing. The petty man?—he will risk death for the sake of profit. The knight?—he will risk it for the sake of fame. The high official?—he will risk it for family; the sage?—he will risk it for the world. All these various men go about the business in a different way and are tagged differently when it comes to fame and reputation; but in blighting their inborn nature and risking their lives for something, they are the same.

The slave boy and the slave girl were out together herding their sheep, and both of them lost their flocks. Ask the slave boy how it happened: well, he had a bundle of writing slips and was reading a book.[14] Ask the slave girl how it happened: well, she was playing a game of toss-and-wait-your-turn. They went about the business in different ways, but in

losing their sheep, they were equal. Bo Yi died for reputation at the foot of Shouyang Mountain; Robber Zhi died for gain on top of Eastern Mound.[15] The two of them died different deaths, but in destroying their lives and blighting their inborn nature, they were equal. Why, then, must we say that Bo Yi was right and Robber Zhi wrong?

Everyone in the world risks his life for something. If he risks it for benevolence and righteousness, then custom names him a gentleman; if he risks it for goods and wealth, then custom names him a petty man. The risking is the same, and yet we have a gentleman here, a petty man there. In destroying their lives and blighting their inborn nature, Robber Zhi and Bo Yi were two of a kind. How then can we pick out the gentleman from the petty man in such a case?

He who applies his nature to benevolence and righteousness may go as far with it as Zeng and Shi, but I would not call him an expert. He who applies his nature to the five flavors may go as far with it as Yu Er,[16] but I would not call him an expert. He who applies his nature to the five notes may go as far with it as Music Master Kuang, but I would not call this good hearing. He who applies his nature to the five colors may go as far with it as Li Zhu, but I would not call this good eyesight. My definition of expertness has nothing to do with benevolence and righteousness; it means being expert in regard to your Virtue, that is all. My definition of expertness has nothing to do with benevolence or righteousness;[17] it means following the true form of your inborn nature, that is all. When I speak of good hearing, I do not mean listening to others; I mean simply listening to yourself. When I speak of good eyesight, I do not mean looking at others; I mean simply looking at yourself. He who does not look at himself but looks at others, who does not get hold of himself but gets hold of others, is getting what other men have got and failing to get what he himself has got. He finds joy in what brings joy to other men but finds no joy in what would bring joy to himself. And if he finds joy in what brings joy to other men but finds no joy in what brings joy to himself, then whether he is a Robber Zhi or a Bo Yi, he is equally deluded and perverse. I have a sense of shame before the Way and its Virtue, and for that reason I do not venture to raise myself up in deeds of benevolence and righteousness or to lower myself in deluded and perverse practices.

1. Virtue (*de*) here seems to mean inner power or vital force; see p. 58, n. 10. This and the following three sections are much closer in thought to the *Daodejing* of Laozi than the preceding sections, and the use of the word *de* seems to accord with its use in the *Daodejing*. Also, here we encounter for the first time in Zhuangzi the term *xing* or "inborn nature," which is so important to Confucian thought.

2. The five vital organs—liver, lungs, heart, kidneys, and spleen—were related to the five elements and later to the five Confucian virtues—benevolence, propriety, good faith, righteousness, wisdom.

3. Also called Li Lou; noted for his exceptionally keen eyesight.

4. Famous musician mentioned on p. 12. With this passage, compare *Daodejing* XII: “The five colors confuse the eye, the five sounds dull the ear.”

5. Zeng Shen, a disciple of Confucius, and Shih Yu, historiographer of the state of Wei, paragons of benevolence and righteousness, respectively.

6. All seem to be building metaphors, though the meaning of the last is doubtful. I read *gou* instead of *ju*.

7. The hedonist philosopher Yang Zhu and the advocate of universal love Mo Di. We would expect a reference to the logicians, however, since they were the ones who argued about “hard,” “white,” etc.; see p. 12, n. 9.

8. Reading *zhizheng* as in the preceding sentence.

9. At this point, the meaning of the symbolism seems to shift (with some violence to the logic of the argument). The webbed toes and extra fingers, which earlier represented the forced and unnatural morality of Confucianism, now become natural deformities such as we have seen in the earlier chapters, which it would be wrong to try to correct.

10. Following Ma Xulun’s interpretation.

11. The Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties.

12. Following Fukunaga, I read *tong* with the man radical. A similar phrase, *tonghu*, appears in sec. 9, and *tongran* in sec. 23.

13. The sage ruler Shun, idol of the Confucian philosophers.

14. An unusual slave boy who, in true Confucian fashion, was attempting to improve his mind.

15. On Bo Yi, the model of righteousness; see p. 126, n. 3; Robber Zhi, who appears later as the subject of sec. 29, represents the ultimate in greed and violence.

16. Apparently a famous chef and connoisseur of flavor.

17. This clause is excessively wordy and merely repeats what was said earlier. I suspect that it is corrupt and that in its original form it contained some reference to the five flavors.

9

HORSES' HOOFS

Horses' hoofs are made for treading frost and snow, their coats for keeping out wind and cold. To munch grass, drink from the stream, lift up their feet and gallop—this is the true nature of horses. Though they might possess great terraces and fine halls, they would have no use for them.

Then along comes Bo Luo.[1] "I'm good at handling horses!" he announces and proceeds to singe them, shave them, pare them, brand them, bind them with martingale and crupper, tie them up in stable and stall. By this time, two or three out of ten horses have died. He goes on to starve them, make them go thirsty, race them, prance them, pull them into line, and force them to run side by side, in front of them the worry of bit and rein, behind them the terror of whip and crop. By this time, more than half the horses have died.

The potter says, "I'm good at handling clay! To round it, I apply the compass; to square it, I apply the T square." The carpenter says, "I'm good at handling wood! To arc it, I apply the curve; to make it straight, I apply the plumb line." But as far as inborn nature is concerned, the clay and the wood surely have no wish to be subjected to compass and square, curve and plumb line. Yet generation after generation sings out in praise, saying, "Bo Luo is good at handling horses! The potter and the carpenter are good at handling clay and wood!" And the same fault is committed by the men who handle the affairs of the world!

In my opinion, someone who was really good at handling the affairs of the world would not go about it like this. The people have their constant inborn nature. To weave for their clothing, to till for their food—this is the Virtue they share. They are one in it and not partisan, and it is called the Emancipation of Heaven. Therefore, in a time of Perfect Virtue, the gait of men is slow and ambling; their gaze is steady and mild. In such an age, mountains have no paths or trails, lakes no boats or bridges. The ten thousand things live species by species, one group settled close to another. Birds and beasts form their flocks and herds; grass and trees grow to fullest height. So it happens that you can tie a cord to the birds and beasts and lead them about or bend down the limb and peer into the nest of the crow and the magpie. In this age of Perfect Virtue, men live the same as birds and beasts, group themselves side by side with the ten thousand things. Who then knows anything about "gentleman" or "petty man"? Dull and unwitting,[2] men have no wisdom; thus their Virtue does not depart from them. Dull and unwitting, they have no desire; this is called uncarved simplicity. In uncarved simplicity, the people attain their true nature.[3]

Then along comes the sage, huffing and puffing after benevolence, reaching on tiptoe for righteousness, and the world for the first time has doubts; mooning and mouthing over his music, snipping and stitching away at his rites, and the world for the first time is divided. Thus, if the plain unwrought substance had not been blighted, how would there be any sacrificial goblets? If the white jade had not been shattered, how would there be any scepters and batons? If the Way and its Virtue had not been cast aside, how would there be any call for benevolence and righteousness? If the true form of the inborn nature had not been abandoned, how would there be any use for rights and music? If the five colors had not confused men, who would fashion patterns and hues? If the five notes had not confused them, who would try to tune things by the six tones? That the unwrought substance was blighted in order to fashion implements—this was the crime of the artisan. That the Way and its Virtue were destroyed in order to create benevolence and righteousness—this was the fault of the sage.

When horses live on the plain, they eat grass and drink from the streams. Pleased, they twine their necks together and rub; angry, they turn back to back and kick. This all horses know how to do. But if you pile poles and yokes on them and line them up in crossbars and shafts, then they will learn to snap the crossbars, break the yoke, rip the carriage top, champ the bit, and chew the reins.[4] Thus horses learn how to commit the worst kinds of mischief.[5] This is the crime of Bo Luo.

In the days of He Xu,[6] people stayed home but didn't know what they were doing, walked around but didn't know where they were going. Their mouths crammed with food, they were merry; drumming on their bellies, they passed the time. This was as much as they were able to do. Then the sage came along with the crouchings and bendings of rites and music, which were intended to reform the bodies of the world; with the reaching-for-a-dangled-prize of benevolence and righteousness, which was intended to comfort the hearts of the world. Then for the first time, people learned to stand on tiptoe and covet knowledge, to fight to the death over profit, and there was no stopping them. This, in the end, was the fault of the sage.

1. Frequently mentioned in early texts as an expert judge of horses.

2. Reading *tong* with the man radical; see p. 62, n. 12.

3. The terms *su* and *pu* (uncarved simplicity), appear frequently in the *Daodejing*, for example, ch. XIX. Waley translates them as "Simplicity" and "the Uncarved Block," respectively.

4. There are many different interpretations of the terms in this sentence. I follow Ma Xulun's emendations and interpretations.

5. Following texts that read *neng* rather than *tai*.

6. Legendary ruler of high antiquity.

10

RIFLING TRUNKS

If one is to guard and take precautions against thieves who rifle trunks, ransack bags, and break open boxes, then he must bind with cords and ropes and make fast with locks and hasps. This the ordinary world calls wisdom. But if a great thief comes along, he will shoulder the boxes, hoist up the trunks, sling the bags over his back, and dash off, only worrying that the cords and ropes, the locks and hasps, are not fastened tightly enough. In that case, the man who earlier was called wise was in fact only piling up goods for the benefit of a great thief.

Let me try explaining what I mean. What the ordinary world calls a wise man is in fact someone who piles things up for the benefit of a great thief, is he not? And what it calls a sage is in fact someone who stands guard for the benefit of a great thief, is he not? How do I know this is so? In times past there was the state of Qi, its neighboring towns within sight of one another, the cries of their dogs and chickens within hearing of one another. The area where its nets and seines were spread, where its plows and spades dug the earth, measured more than two thousand *li* square, filling all the space within its four borders.[1] And in the way its ancestral temples and its altars of the soil and grain were set up, its towns and villages and hamlets were governed, was there anything that did not accord with the laws of the sages? Yet one morning Viscount Tian Cheng murdered the ruler of Qi and stole his state. And was it only the state he stole? Along with it, he also stole the laws that the wisdom of the sages had devised. Thus, although Viscount Tian Cheng gained the name of thief and bandit, he was able to rest as peacefully as a Yao or a Shun. The smaller states did not dare condemn him; the larger states did not dare attack; and for twelve generations, his family held possession of the state of Qi.[2] Is this not a case in which a man, stealing the state of Qi, along with it stole the laws of the sages' wisdom and used them to guard the person of a thief and a bandit?

Let me try explaining it. What that ordinary world calls a man of perfect wisdom is in fact someone who piles things up for the benefit of a great thief; what the ordinary world calls a perfect sage is in fact someone who stands guard for the benefit of a great thief. How do I know this is so? In times past, Guan Longfeng was cut down; Bi Gan was disemboweled; Chang Hong was torn apart; and Wu Zixu was left to rot. All four were worthy men, and yet they could not escape destruction.[3]

One of Robber Zhi's followers once asked Zhi, "Does the thief, too, have a Way?"

Zhi replied, “How could he get anywhere if he didn’t have a Way? Making shrewd guesses as to how much booty is stashed away in the room is sageliness; being the first one in is bravery; being the last one out is righteousness; knowing whether or not the job can be pulled off is wisdom; dividing up the loot fairly is benevolence. No one in the world ever succeeded in becoming a great thief if he didn’t have all five!”

From this, we can see that the good man must acquire the Way of the sage before he can distinguish himself, and Robber Zhi must acquire the Way of the sage before he can practice his profession. But good men in the world are few, and bad men many, so in fact the sage brings little benefit to the world but much harm. Thus it is said, “When the lips are gone, the teeth are cold; when the wine of Lu is thin, Handan is besieged.”[4] And when the sage is born, the great thief appears.

Cudgel and cane the sages, and let the thieves and bandits go their way; then the world will at last be well ordered! If the stream dries up, the valley will be empty; if the hills wash away, the deep pools will be filled up. And if the sage is dead and gone, then no more great thieves will arise. The world will then be peaceful and free of fuss.

But until the sage is dead, great thieves will never cease to appear, and if you pile on more sages in hopes of bringing the world to order, you will only be piling up more profit for Robber Zhi. Fashion pecks and bushels for people to measure by, and they will steal by peck and bushel.[5] Fashion scales and balances for people to weigh by, and they will steal by scale and balance. Fashion tallies and seals to ensure trustworthiness, and people will steal with tallies and seals. Fashion benevolence and righteousness to reform people, and they will steal with benevolence and righteousness. How do I know this is so? He who steals a belt buckle pays with his life; he who steals a state gets to be a feudal lord—and we all know that benevolence and righteousness are to be found at the gates of the feudal lords. Is this not a case of stealing benevolence and righteousness and the wisdom of the sages? So men go racing in the footsteps of the great thieves, aiming for the rank of feudal lord, stealing benevolence and righteousness and taking for themselves all the profits of peck and bushel, scale and balance, tally and seal. Though you try to lure them aside with rewards of official carriages and caps of state, you cannot move them; though you threaten them with the executioner’s ax, you cannot deter them. This piling up of profits for Robber Zhi to the point where nothing can deter him—this is all the fault of the sage!

The saying goes, “The fish should not be taken from the deep pool; the sharp weapons of the state should not be shown to men.”[6] The sage is the sharp weapon of the world, and therefore he should not be where the world can see him.[7]

Cut off sageliness, cast away wisdom, and then the great thieves will cease. Break the jades, crush the pearls, and petty thieves will no longer rise up. Burn the tallies, shatter the seals, and the people will be simple and guileless. Hack up the bushels, snap the balances in two, and the people will no longer wrangle. Destroy and wipe out the laws that the sage has made for the world, and at last you will find that you can reason with the people.

Discard and confuse the six tones; smash and unstring the pipes and lutes; stop up the ears of the blind musician Kuang; and for the first time; the people of the world will be able to hold on to their hearing. Wipe out patterns and designs; scatter the five colors; glue

up the eyes of Li Zhu; and for the first time, the people of the world will be able to hold on to their eyesight. Destroy and cut to pieces the curve and plumb line; throw away the compass and square; shackle the fingers of Artisan Chui;[8] and for the first time; the people of the world will possess real skill. Thus it is said, "Great skill is like clumsiness."[9] Put a stop to the ways of Zeng and Shi; gag the mouths of Yang and Mo; wipe out and reject benevolence and righteousness; and for the first time, the Virtue of the world will reach the state of Mysterious Leveling.[10]

When men hold on to their eyesight, the world will no longer be dazzled. When men hold on to their hearing, the world will no longer be wearied. When men hold on to their wisdom, the world will no longer be confused. When men hold on to their Virtue, the world will no longer go awry. Men like Zeng, Shi, Yang, Mo, Musician Kuang, Artisan Chui, or Li Zhu all displayed their Virtue on the outside and thereby blinded and misled the world. As methods go, this one is worthless!

Have you alone never heard of that age of Perfect Virtue? Long ago, in the time of Yong Cheng, Da Ting, Bo Huang, Zhong Yang, Li Lu, Li Xu, Xian Yuan, He Xu, Zun Lu, Zhu Rong, Fu Xi, and Shen Nong, the people knotted cords and used them.[11] They relished their food, admired their clothing, enjoyed their customs, and were content with their houses. Though neighboring states were within sight of one another and could hear the cries of one another's dogs and chickens, the people grew old and died without ever traveling beyond their own borders. At a time such as this, there was nothing but the most perfect order.

But now something has happened to make people crane their necks and stand on tiptoe. "There's a worthy man in such and such a place!" they cry, and bundling up their provisions, they dash off. At home, they abandon their parents; abroad, they shirk the service of their ruler. Their footprints form an unending trail to the borders of the other feudal lords; their carriage tracks weave back and forth a thousand *li* and more. This is the fault of men in high places who covet knowledge.[12]

As long as men in high places covet knowledge and are without the Way, the world will be in great confusion. How do I know this is so? Knowledge enables men to fashion bows, crossbows, nets, stringed arrows, and like contraptions; but when this happens, the birds flee in confusion to the sky. Knowledge enables men to fashion fishhooks, lures, seines, dragnets, trawls, and weirs; but when this happens, the fish flee in confusion to the depths of the water. Knowledge enables men to fashion pitfalls, snares, cages, traps, and gins; but when this happens, the beasts flee in confusion to the swamps. And the flood of rhetoric that enables men to invent wily schemes and poisonous slanders, the glib gabble of "hard" and "white," the foul fustian of "same" and "different," bewilder the understanding of common men.[13] So the world is dulled and darkened by great confusion. The blame lies in this coveting of knowledge.

In the world, everyone knows enough to pursue what he does not know, but no one knows enough to pursue what he already knows. Everyone knows enough to condemn what he takes to be no good, but no one knows enough to condemn what he has already

taken to be good.[14] This is how the great confusion comes about, searing the vigor of hills and streams below, overturning the round of the four seasons in between. There is no insect that creeps and crawls, no creature that flutters and flies, that has not lost its inborn nature. So great is the confusion of the world that comes from coveting knowledge!

From the Three Dynasties on down, it has been this and nothing else—shoving aside the pure and artless people and delighting in busy, bustling flatterers; abandoning the limpidity and calm of inaction and delighting in jumbled and jangling ideas. And this jumble and jangle has for long confused the world.

1. That is, it was rich and fertile and had no wastelands.

2. The assassination of the king of Qi took place in 481 BCE; the actual usurpation of the state by the Tian family, in 386 BCE. No one has satisfactorily explained the "twelve generations"; Yu Yue suggests that it is a copyist's error for *shishi* (generation after generation).

3. All four men attempted to give good advice to their erring sovereigns and ended by being put to death or forced to commit suicide. On Guan Longfeng and Bi Gan, see p. 23; on Chang Hong and Wu Zixu, see p. 227, n. 2. I suppose this is meant to illustrate how the rulers "stole" the wisdom of their counselors, though it is hardly apt, since all the rulers came to violent ends as a result of their wickedness.

4. At a gathering of the feudal lords at the court of Chu, the ruler of Lu presented a gift of thin wine, while the ruler of Zhao presented rich wine. But the wine steward of Chu, having failed to receive a bribe from the ruler of Zhao, switched the gifts, and the ruler of Chu, angered, attacked Zhao and laid siege to its capital, Handan. Another version of the story asserts that the ruler of Chu, angered at Lu's thin wine, attacked Lu; and a third state, which had hitherto been intimidated by Chu's power, took advantage of the opportunity to attack Chu's ally, Zhao. In both versions, the saying is meant to illustrate the existence of a causal connection between apparently unrelated phenomena.

5. Tian Chang, Viscount Cheng of Qi, who appeared as the "stealer" of the state of Qi, was said to have won the support of the people of Qi by using a larger-than-standard measure in doling out grain to the people, but the standard measure when collecting taxes in grain. See *Zuozhuan*, Duke Zhao, third year. The writer probably has this fact in mind.

6. An old saying, also found in *Daodejing* XXXVI.

7. If he is not to be a danger to the world, he must, like the true Daoist sage, remain unknown and unrecognized.

8. A skilled artisan of ancient times; see p. 153.

9. The same saying appears in *Daodejing* XLV. But here it does not seem to fit the context, and I suspect that as Wang Maohong suggested, it is an interpolation, probably by someone who wished to establish a connection between this passage and the *Daodejing*.

10. Xuantong, a term also found in *Daodejing* LVI. Waley explains it there as a state "in which there is a general perception not effected through particular senses."

11. As a means of reminding themselves of things; they had no use for writing. The men mentioned in this sentence appear to be mythical rulers of antiquity, some mentioned in other early texts, some appearing only here. The passage from this point on to the next to last sentence is all but identical with a passage in *Daodejing* LXXX.

12. In late Zhou times, the feudal lords competed to attract men of unusual intelligence and ability to their courts. The state of Qi, which, as we have seen, was ruled at the time by the Tian family, was particularly famous for the inducements that it offered to draw philosophers from all over China to its state-sponsored academy.

13. I follow Fukunaga in the interpretation of the terms in this sentence.

14. That is, to discard the concept of good; I read *yi* as identical with the *yi* in the earlier parallel sentence.

11

LET IT BE, LEAVE IT ALONE

I have heard of letting the world be, of leaving it alone; I have never heard of governing the world. You let it be for fear of corrupting the inborn nature of the world; you leave it alone for fear of distracting the Virtue of the world. If the nature of the world is not corrupted, if the Virtue of the world is not distracted, why should there be any governing of the world?

Long ago, when the sage Yao governed the world, he made the world bright and gleeful; men delighted in their nature, and there was no calmness anywhere. When the tyrant Jie governed the world, he made the world weary and vexed; men found bitterness in their nature, and there was no contentment anywhere. To lack calmness, to lack contentment, is to go against Virtue, and there has never been anyone in the world who could go against Virtue and survive for long.

Are men exceedingly joyful?—they will do damage to the yang element. Are men exceedingly angry?—they will do damage to the yin. And when both yang and yin are damaged, the four seasons will not come as they should; heat and cold will fail to achieve their proper harmony; and this in turn will do harm to the bodies of men. It will make men lose a proper sense of joy and anger, to be constantly shifting from place to place, to think up schemes that gain nothing, to set out on roads that reach no glorious conclusion. Then for the first time, the world will grow restless and aspiring,[1] and soon afterward will appear the ways of Robber Zhi, Zeng, and Shi.

Then, although the whole world joins in rewarding good men, there will never be enough reward; though the whole world joins in punishing evil men, there will never be enough punishment. Huge as the world is, it cannot supply sufficient reward or punishment. From the Three Dynasties on down, there has been nothing but bustle and fuss, all over this matter of rewards and punishments. How could people have any leisure to rest in the true form of their inborn nature and fate!

Do men delight in what they see?—they are corrupted by colors. Do they delight in what they hear?—they are corrupted by sounds. Do they delight in benevolence?—they bring confusion to Virtue. Do they delight in righteousness?—they turn their backs on reason. Do they delight in rites?—they are aiding artificiality. Do they delight in music?—they are aiding dissolution. Do they delight in sageness?—they are assisting artifice. Do they delight in knowledge?—they are assisting the fault finders. As long as the world rests in the true form of its in-born nature and fate, it makes no difference whether or not these eight delights exist. But if the world does not rest in the true form of its nature and fate,

then these eight delights will begin to grow warped and crooked, jumbled and deranged, and will bring confusion to the world. And if on top of that, the world begins to honor them and cherish them, then the delusion of the world will be great indeed! You say these are only a fancy that will pass in time? Yet men prepare themselves with fasts and austerities when they come to describe them, kneel solemnly on their mats when they recommend them, beat drums and sing to set them forth in dance. What's to be done about it, I'm sure I don't know!

If the gentleman finds he has no other choice than to direct and look after the world, then the best course for him is inaction. As long as there is inaction, he may rest in the true form of his nature and fate. If he values his own body more than the management of the world, then he can be entrusted with the world. If he is more careful of his own body than of the management of the world, then the world can be handed over to him.[2] If the gentleman can in truth keep from rending apart his five vital organs, from tearing out his eyesight and hearing, then he will command corpse-like stillness and dragon vision, the silence of deep pools, and the voice of thunder. His spirit will move in the train of Heaven, gentle and easy in inaction, and the ten thousand things will be dust on the wind. "What leisure have I now for governing the world?" he will say.

Cui Zhu was questioning Lao Dan. "If you do not govern the world, then how can you improve men's minds?"

Lao Dan said, "Be careful—don't meddle with men's minds! Men's minds can be forced down or boosted up, but this downing and upping imprisons and brings death to the mind. Gentle and shy, the mind can bend the hard and strong; it can chisel and cut away, carve and polish. Its heat is that of burning fire, its coldness that of solid ice, its swiftness such that, in the time it takes to lift and lower the head, it has twice swept over the four seas and beyond. At rest, it is deep fathomed and still; in movement, it is far-flung as the heavens, racing and galloping out of reach of all bonds. This indeed is the mind of man!"

In ancient times the Yellow Emperor first used benevolence and righteousness to meddle with the minds of men.[3] Yao and Shun followed him and worked till there was no more down on their thighs, no more hair on their shins, trying to nourish the bodies of the men of the world. They grieved their five vital organs in the practice of benevolence and righteousness, taxed their blood and breath in the establishment of laws and standards. But still some men would not submit to their rule, and so they had to exile Huan Dou to Mount Chung, drive away the Sanmiao tribes to the region of Sanwei, and banish Gong to the Dark City.[4] This shows that they could not make the world submit.

By the time the kings of the Three Dynasties appeared, the world was in great consternation indeed. On the lowest level, there were men like the tyrant Jie and Robber Zhi, on the highest, men like Zeng and Shi, and the Confucianists and Mohists rose up all around. Then joy and anger eyed each other with suspicion; stupidity and wisdom duped each other; good and bad called one another names; falsehood and truth slandered each other; and the world sank into a decline. There was no more unity to the Great Virtue, and

the inborn nature and fate shattered and fell apart. The world coveted knowledge, and the hundred clans were thrown into turmoil.[5] Then there were axes and saws to shape things; ink and plumb lines to trim them; mallets and gouges to poke holes in them; and the world, muddled and deranged, was in great confusion. The crime lay in this meddling with men's minds. So it was that worthy men crouched in hiding below the great mountains and yawning cliffs, and the lords of ten thousand chariots fretted and trembled above in their ancestral halls.

In the world today, the victims of the death penalty lie heaped together; the bearers of cangues tread on one another's heels; the sufferers of punishment are never out of one another's sight. And now come the Confucianists and Mohists, waving their arms, striding into the very midst of the fettered and manacled men. Ah, that they should go this far, that they should be so brazen, so lacking in any sense of shame! Who can convince me that sagely wisdom is not in fact the wedge that fastens the cangue, that benevolence and righteousness are not in fact the loop and lock of these fetters and manacles? How do I know that Zeng and Shi are not the whistling arrows that signal the approach of Jie and Zhi? Therefore I say, cut off sageness, cast away wisdom, and the world will be in perfect order.

The Yellow Emperor had ruled as Son of Heaven for nineteen years, and his commands were heeded throughout the world, when he heard that Master Guang Cheng was living on top of the Mountain of Emptiness and Identity. He therefore went to visit him. "I have heard that you, sir, have mastered the Perfect Way. May I venture to ask about the essence of the Perfect Way?" he said. "I would like to get hold of the essence of Heaven and earth and use it to aid the five grains and to nourish the common people. I would also like to control the yin and yang in order to ensure the growth of all living things. How may this be done?"

Master Guang Cheng said, "What you say you want to learn about pertains to the true substance of things, but what you say you want to control pertains to things in their divided state.[6] Ever since you began to govern the world, rain falls before the cloud vapors have even gathered; the plants and trees shed their leaves before they have even turned yellow; and the light of the sun and moon grows more and more sickly. Shallow and vapid, with the mind of a prattling knave—what good would it do to tell *you* about the Perfect Way!"

The Yellow Emperor withdrew, gave up his throne, built a solitary hut, spread a mat of white rushes, and lived for three months in retirement. Then he went once more to request an interview. Master Guang Cheng was lying with his face to the south.[7] The Yellow Emperor, approaching in a humble manner, crept forward on his knees, bowed his head twice, and said, "I have heard that you, sir, have mastered the Perfect Way. I venture to ask about the governing of the body. What should I do in order to live a long life?"

Master Guang Cheng sat up with a start. "Excellent, this question of yours! Come, I will tell you about the Perfect Way. The essence of the Perfect Way is deep and darkly shrouded; the extreme of the Perfect Way is mysterious and hushed in silence. Let there be no seeing, no hearing; enfold the spirit in quietude, and the body will right itself. Be still,

be pure, do not labor your body, do not churn up your essence, and then you can live a long life. When the eye does not see, the ear does not hear, and the mind does not know, then your spirit will protect the body, and the body will enjoy long life. Be wary of what is within you; block off what is outside you, for much knowledge will do you harm. Then I will lead you up above the Great Brilliance to the source of the Perfect Yang; I will guide you through the Dark and Mysterious Gate to the source of the Perfect Yin. Heaven and earth have their controllers, the yin and yang their storehouses. You have only to take care and guard your own body; these other things will of themselves grow sturdy. As for myself, I guard this unity, abide in this harmony, and therefore I have kept myself alive for twelve hundred years, and never has my body suffered any decay."

The Yellow Emperor bowed twice and said, "Master Guang Cheng, you have been as a Heaven to me!"

Master Guang Cheng said, "Come, I will explain to you. This Thing I have been talking about is inexhaustible, and yet men all suppose that it has an end. This Thing I have been talking about is unfathomable, and yet men all suppose that it has a limit. He who attains my Way will be a Bright One on high,[8] and a king in the world below. But he who fails to attain my Way, though he may see the light above him, will remain below as dust. All the hundred creatures that flourish are born out of dust and return to dust. So I will take leave of you, to enter the gate of the inexhaustible and wander in the limitless fields, to form a triad with the light of the sun and moon, to partake in the constancy of Heaven and earth. What stands before me I mingle with, what is far from me I leave in darkness.[9] All other men may die; I alone will survive!"

Cloud Chief was traveling east and had passed the branches of the Fuyao when he suddenly came upon Big Concealment.[10] Big Concealment at the moment was amusing himself by slapping his thighs and hopping around like a sparrow. When Cloud Chief saw this, he stopped in bewilderment, stood dead still in his tracks, and said, "Old gentleman, who are you? What is this you're doing?"

Big Concealment, without interrupting his thigh slapping and sparrow hopping, replied to Cloud Chief, "Amusing myself."

"I would like to ask a question," said Cloud Chief.

"Oh dear!" said Big Concealment, for the first time raising his head and looking at Cloud Chief.

"The breath of heaven is out of harmony; the breath of earth tangles and snarls," said Cloud Chief. "The six breaths do not blend properly;[11] the four seasons do not stay in order. Now I would like to harmonize the essences of the six breaths in order to bring nourishment to all living creatures. How should I go about it?"

Big Concealment, still thigh slapping and sparrow hopping, shook his head. "I have no idea! I have no idea!"

So Cloud Chief got no answer. Three years later he was again traveling east and, as he passed the fields of Song, happened on Big Concealment once more. Cloud Chief, overjoyed, dashed forward and presented himself, saying, "Heavenly Master, have you

forgotten me? Have you forgotten me?" Then he bowed his head twice and begged for some instruction from Big Concealment.

Big Concealment said, "Aimless wandering does not know what it seeks; demented drifting does not know where it goes. A wanderer, idle, unbound, I view the sights of Undeception. What more do I know?"

Cloud Chief said, "I, too, consider myself a demented drifter, but the people follow me wherever I go, and I have no choice but to think of them. It is for their sake now that I beg one word of instruction!"

Big Concealment said, "If you confuse the constant strands of Heaven and violate the true form of things, then Dark Heaven will reach no fulfillment. Instead, the beasts will scatter from their herds; the birds will cry all night; disaster will come to the grass and trees; misfortune will reach even to the insects. Ah, this is the fault of men who 'govern'!"

"Then what should I do?" said Cloud Chief.

"Ah," said Big Concealment, "you are too far gone! Up, up, stir yourself and be off!"

Cloud Chief said, "Heavenly Master, it has been hard indeed for me to meet with you—I beg one word of in struction!"

"Well, then—mind-nourishment!" said Big Concealment.[12] "You have only to rest in inaction, and things will transform themselves. Smash your form and body, spit out hearing and eyesight, forget you are a thing among other things, and you may join in great unity with the deep and boundless. Undo the mind, slough off spirit, be blank and soulless, and the ten thousand things one by one will return to the root—return to the root and not know why. Dark and undifferentiated chaos—to the end of life, none will depart from it. But if you try to know it, you have already departed from it. Do not ask what its name is; do not try to observe its form. Things will live naturally and of themselves."

Cloud Chief said, "The Heavenly Master has favored me with this Virtue, instructed me in this Silence. All my life I have been looking for it, and now at last I have it!" He bowed his head twice, stood up, took his leave, and went away.

The common run of men all welcome those who are like themselves and scorn those who differ from themselves. The reason they favor those who are like themselves and do not favor those who are different is that their minds are set on distinguishing themselves from the crowd. But if their minds are set on distinguishing themselves from the crowd, how is this ever going to distinguish them from the crowd? It is better to follow the crowd and be content, for no matter how much you may know, it can never match the many talents of the crowd combined.

Here is a man who wants to take over the management of another man's state.[13] He thinks thereby to seize all the profits enjoyed by the kings of the Three Dynasties but fails to take note of their worries. This is to gamble with another man's state, and how long can you expect to gamble with his state and not lose it? Fewer than one man in ten thousand will succeed in holding on to the state; the odds in favor of losing it are more than ten thousand to one. It is sad indeed that the possessors of states do not realize this!

Now the possessor of a state possesses a great thing. Because he possesses a great thing, he cannot be regarded as a mere thing himself.[14] He is a thing, and yet he is not a mere thing; therefore he can treat other things as mere things. He who clearly understands that in treating other things as mere things, he himself is no longer a mere thing—how could he be content only to govern the hundred clans of the world and do nothing more? He will move in and out of the Six Realms, wander over the Nine Continents, going alone, coming alone. He may be called a Sole Possessor, and a man who is a Sole Possessor may be said to have reached the peak of eminence.

The Great Man in his teaching is like the shadow that follows a form, the echo that follows a sound. Only when questioned does he answer, and then he pours out all his thoughts, making himself the companion of the world. He dwells in the echoless, moves in the directionless, takes by the hand you who are rushing and bustling back and forth[15] and proceeds to wander in the beginningless. He passes in and out of the boundless and is ageless as the sun. His face and form[16] blend with the Great Unity, the Great Unity that is selfless. Being selfless, how then can he look on possession as possession? He who fixed his eyes on possession—he was the "gentleman" of ancient times. He who fixes his eyes on nothingness—he is the true friend of Heaven and earth.

What is lowly and yet must be used—things.[17] What is humble and yet must be relied on—the people. What is irksome[18] and yet must be attended to—affairs. What is sketchy and yet must be proclaimed—laws. What seems to apply only to distant relationships and yet must be observed—righteousness. What seems to apply only to intimate relationships and yet must be broadened—benevolence. What is confining and yet must be repeatedly practiced—ritual. What is already apt and yet must be heightened—Virtue. What is One and yet must be adapted—the Way. What is spiritual and yet must be put into action—Heaven.

Therefore the sage contemplates Heaven but does not assist it. He finds completion in Virtue but piles on nothing more. He goes forth in the Way but does not scheme. He accords with benevolence but does not set great store by it. He draws close to righteousness but does not labor over it. He responds to the demands of ritual and does not shun them. He disposes of affairs and makes no excuses. He brings all to order with laws and allows no confusion. He depends on the people and does not make light of them. He relies on things and does not throw them aside. Among things, there are none that are worth using, and yet they must be used.

He who does not clearly understand Heaven will not be pure in Virtue. He who has not mastered the Way will find himself without any acceptable path of approach. He who does not clearly understand the Way is pitiable indeed!

What is this thing called the Way? There is the Way of Heaven and the way of man. To rest in inaction, and command respect—this is the Way of Heaven. To engage in action and become entangled in it—this is the way of man. The ruler is the Way of Heaven; his subjects are the way of man. The Way of Heaven and the way of man are far apart. This is something to consider carefully!

1. The words “restless and aspiring” represent four characters in the original whose meaning is very doubtful.

2. A similar saying is found in *Daodejing* XIII, though the wording is somewhat different.

3. Daoist writers ordinarily have only praise for the Yellow Emperor, and in Han times Daoism was known as *Huanglao*, the teaching of the Yellow Emperor and Laozi. It is surprising, therefore, to find him cited here as the prime meddler, though this is typical of the shifting roles assigned to the figures who appear in the *Zhuangzi*. It is unclear whether the following section should be taken as a continuation of Laozi’s speech or as the words of the writer; I have taken it as the latter.

4. These banishments of evil and insubordinate men are mentioned in the *Book of Documents*, “Canon of Shun,” in which their presence has long raised the troubling question of why there should have been any unsubmissive men during the rule of a sage.

5. Following Zhang Binglin’s interpretation.

6. That is, the yin and yang, being two, already represent a departure from the primal unity of the Way. What Master Guang Cheng is objecting to, of course, is the fact that the Yellow Emperor wishes to “control” them.

7. The Chinese ruler, when acting as sovereign, faces south. Master Guang Cheng, by assuming the same position, indicates his spiritual supremacy.

8. The term “Bright One” (*huang*) was originally an epithet for Heaven or a being commanding respect and awe, such as the sage rulers of antiquity.

9. The meaning is doubtful.

10. Cloud Chief and Big Concealment are inventions of the writer, the latter apparently representing the Daoist sage. Fuyao appeared in sec. 1 as a name for the whirlwind; here perhaps it is an error for Fusang, a huge mythical tree in the eastern sea from whose branches the sun rises.

11. Traditionally defined as the breaths of the yin, yang, wind, rain, darkness, and light.

12. “Mind-nourishment” may seem an odd thing to recommend, particularly as the whole anecdote is directed against purposeful “governing” or “nourishing.” But this is typical of Daoist paradox. As we soon see, it does not in fact mean what it seems to mean.

13. Probably a reference to the itinerant statesmen-advisers of late Zhou times who wandered about offering their services to the various feudal lords.

14. I follow Fukunaga in punctuating after the first *wu*.

15. Following Yu Yue’s interpretation.

16. Following Zhang Binglin’s interpretation.

17. The remainder of the chapter, with its recognition of the necessity for benevolence, righteousness, law, ritual, etc., seems to clash violently with what has gone before. Some commentators interpret it as a description of the kind of compromise that even the perfect Daoist ruler must make if he is to rule effectively. Others regard it as an interpolation or a passage misplaced from some other section. See the similar passage on p. 79.

18. Following Ma Xulun's interpretation.

12

HEAVEN AND EARTH

Heaven and earth are huge, but they are alike in their transformations. The ten thousand things are numerous, but they are one in their good order. Human beings are many, but they all are subjects of the sovereign. The sovereign finds his source in Virtue, his completion in Heaven. Therefore it is said that the sovereign of dark antiquity ruled the world through inaction, through Heavenly Virtue and nothing more.

Look at words in the light of the Way—then the sovereign of the world will be upright.[1] Look at distinctions in the light of the Way—then the duty[2] of sovereign and subject will be clear. Look at abilities in the light of the Way—then the officials of the world will be well ordered. Look everywhere in the light of the Way—then the response of the ten thousand things will be complete.

Pervading Heaven and earth: that is the Way.[3] Moving among the ten thousand things: that is Virtue. Superiors governing the men below them: that is called administration. Ability finding trained expression: that is called skill. Skill is subsumed in administration, administration in duty, duty in Virtue, Virtue in the Way, and the Way in Heaven. Therefore it is said, those who shepherded the world in ancient times were without desire, and the world was satisfied, without action, and the ten thousand things were transformed. They were deep and silent, and the hundred clans were at rest. The Record says: “Stick to the One, and the ten thousand tasks will be accomplished; achieve mindlessness, and the gods and spirits will bow down.”[4]

The Master said:[5] The Way covers and bears up the ten thousand things—vast, vast is its greatness! The gentleman must pluck out his mind! To act through inaction is called Heaven. To speak through inaction is called Virtue. To love men and bring profit to things is called benevolence. To make the unlike alike is called magnitude. To move beyond barrier and distinction is called liberality. To possess the ten thousand unlikes is called wealth. To hold fast to Virtue is called enrootment. To mature in Virtue is called establishment. To follow the Way is called completion. To see that external things do not blunt the will is called perfection. When the gentleman clearly comprehends these ten things, then how huge will be the greatness of his mind setting forth, how endless his ramblings with the ten thousand things!

Such a man will leave the gold hidden in the mountains, the pearls hidden in the depths. He will see no profit in money and goods, no enticement in eminence and wealth, no joy in

long life, no grief in early death, no honor in affluence, no shame in poverty. He will not snatch the profits of a whole generation and make them his private hoard; he will not lord it over the world and think that he dwells in glory. His glory is enlightenment, [for he knows that] the ten thousand things belong to one storehouse, that life and death share the same body.

The Master said: The Way—how deep its dwelling, how pure its clearness! Without it, the bells and chiming stones will not sound. The bells and stones have voices, but unless they are struck, they will not sound. The ten thousand things—who can make them be still?

The man of kingly Virtue moves in simplicity and is ashamed to be a master of facts. He takes his stand in the original source, and his understanding extends to the spirits. Therefore his Virtue is far-reaching. His mind moves forth only when some external thing has roused it. Without the Way, the body can have no life, and without Virtue, life can have no clarity. To preserve the body and live out life, to establish Virtue and make clear the Way—is this not kingly Virtue? Broad and boundless, suddenly he emerges, abruptly he moves, and the ten thousand things follow him—this is what is called the man of kingly Virtue!

He sees in the darkest dark, hears where there is no sound. In the midst of darkness, he alone sees the dawn; in the midst of the soundless, he alone hears harmony. Therefore, in depth piled upon depth, he can spy out the thing; in spirituality piled upon spirituality, he can discover the essence.[6] So in his dealings with the ten thousand things, he supplies all their wants out of total nothingness. Racing with the hour, he seeks lodging for a night, in the great, the small, the long, the short, the near, the far.[7]

The Yellow Emperor went wandering north of the Red Water, ascended the slopes of Kunlun, and gazed south. When he got home, he discovered he had lost his Dark Pearl. He sent Knowledge to look for it, but Knowledge couldn't find it. He sent the keen-eyed Li Zhu to look for it, but Li Zhu couldn't find it. He sent Wrangling Debate to look for it, but Wrangling Debate couldn't find it. At last he tried employing Shapeless, and Shapeless found it.

The Yellow Emperor said, "How odd!—in the end it was Shapeless who was able to find it!"

Yao's teacher was Xu You; Xu You's teacher was Nie Que; Nie Que's teacher was Wang Ni; and Wang Ni's teacher was Piyi. Yao asked Xu You, "Would Nie Que do as the counterpart of Heaven? I could get Wang Ni to ask him to take over the throne from me."

Xu You said, "Watch out! You'll put the world in danger! Nie Que is a man of keen intelligence and superb understanding, nimble-witted and sharp. His inborn nature surpasses that of other men, and he knows how to exploit what Heaven has given him through human devices. He would do his best to prevent error, but he doesn't understand the source from which error arises. Make *him* the counterpart of Heaven? Watch—he will start leaning on men and forget about Heaven. He will put himself first and relegate others to a class apart. He will worship knowledge and chase after it with the speed of fire. He will become the servant of causes, the victim of things, looking in all four directions to see

how things are faring, trying to attend to all wants, changing along with things, and possessing no trace of any constancy of his own. How could he possibly do as counterpart of Heaven? However, there are clans, and there are clan heads. He might do as the father of one branch, though he would never do as the father of the father of the branch. His kind are the forerunners of disorder, a disaster to the ministers facing north, a peril to the sovereign facing south!"

Yao was seeing the sights at Hua when the border guard of Hua said, "Aha—a sage! I beg to offer up prayers for the sage. They will bring the sage long life!"

Yao said, "No, thanks."

"They will bring the sage riches!"

Yao said, "No, thanks."

"They will bring the sage many sons!"

Yao said, "No, thanks."

"Long life, riches, many sons—these are what all men desire!" said the border guard. "How is it that you alone do not desire them?"

Yao said, "Many sons mean many fears. Riches mean many troubles. Long life means many shames. These three are of no use in nourishing Virtue—therefore I decline them."

The border guard said, "At first I took you for a sage. Now I see you are a mere gentleman. When Heaven gives birth to the ten thousand people, it is certain to have jobs to assign to them. If you have many sons and their jobs are assigned to them, what is there to fear? If you share your riches with other men, what troubles will you have? The true sage is a quail at rest, a little fledgling at its meal, a bird in flight that leaves no trail behind. When the world has the Way, he joins in the chorus with all other things. When the world is without the Way, he nurses his Virtue and retires in leisure. And after a thousand years, should he tire of the world, he will leave it and ascend to the immortals, riding on those white clouds all the way up to the village of God. The three worries you have cited never touch him; his body is forever free of peril. How can he suffer any shame?"

The border guard turned and left. Yao followed him, saying, "Please—I would like to ask you …"

"Go away!" said the border guard.

When Yao ruled the world, Bocheng Zigao was enfeoffed as one of his noblemen. But when Yao passed the throne to Shun, and Shun passed it to Yu, Bocheng Zigao relinquished his title and took up farming. Yu went to see him and found him working in the fields. Yu scurried forward in the humblest manner, came to a halt, and said, "In former times when Yao ruled the world, sir, you served as one of his noblemen. But when Yao passed the throne to Shun, and Shun passed it to me, you relinquished your title and took up farming. May I be so bold as to ask why?"

Zigao said, "In former times when Yao ruled the world, he handed out no rewards, and yet the people worked hard; he handed out no punishments, and yet the people were cautious. Now you reward and punish, and still the people fail to do good. From now on, Virtue will decay; from now on, penalties will prevail. The disorder of future ages will

have its beginning here! You had better be on your way now—don't interrupt my work!" Busily, busily he proceeded with his farm work, never turning to look back.

In the Great Beginning, there was nonbeing; there was no being, no name. Out of it arose One; there was One, but it had no form. Things got hold of it and it came to life, and it was called Virtue. Before things had forms, they had their allotments; these were of many kinds but not cut off from one another, and they were called fates. Out of the flow and flux, things were born, and as they grew, they developed distinctive shapes; these were called forms. The forms and bodies held within them spirits, each with its own characteristics and limitations, and this was called the inborn nature. If the nature is trained, you may return to Virtue, and Virtue at its highest peak is identical with the Beginning. Being identical, you will be empty; being empty, you will be great. You may join in the cheeping and chirping, and when you have joined in the cheeping and chirping, you may join with Heaven and earth. Your joining is wild and confused, as though you were stupid, as though you were demented. This is called Dark Virtue. Rude and unwitting, you take part in the Great Submission.

Confucius said to Lao Dan, "Here's a man who works to master the Way as though he were trying to talk down an opponent,[8] making the unacceptable acceptable, the not so, so. As the rhetoricians say, he can separate 'hard' from 'white' as clearly as though they were dangling from the eaves there. Can a man like this be called a sage?"

Lao Dan said, "A man like this is a drudging slave, a craftsman bound to his calling, wearing out his body, grieving his mind. Because the dog can catch rats, he ends up on a leash.[9] Because of his nimbleness, the monkey is dragged down from the mountain forest. Qiu,[10] I'm going to tell you something—something you could never hear for yourself and something you would never know how to speak of. People who have heads and feet but no minds and no ears—there are mobs of them. To think that beings with bodies can all go on existing along with that which is bodiless and formless—it can never happen! A man's stops and starts, his life and death, his rises and falls—none of these can he do anything about. Yet he thinks that the mastery of them lies with man! Forget things, forget Heaven, and be called a forgetter of self. The man who has forgotten self may be said to have entered Heaven."

* * *

Jianglü Mian went to see Ji Che and said, "The ruler of Lu begged me to give him some instruction. I declined, but he wouldn't let me go, and so I had no choice but to tell him something. I don't know whether or not what I said was right, but I would like to try repeating it to you. I said to the ruler of Lu, 'You must be courteous and temperate! Pick out and promote those who are loyal and public-spirited, allow no flattery or favoritism, and then who of your people will venture to be unruly?'"

Ji Che heehawed with laughter. "As far as the Virtue of emperors and kings is concerned," he said, "your advice is like the praying mantis that waved its arms angrily in front of an approaching carriage—it just isn't up to the job. If the ruler of Lu went about it

in that way, he would simply get himself all stirred up,[11] place himself on a tower or a terrace. Then things would flock around him, and the crowd would turn its steps in his direction!"

Jianglü Mian's eyes bugged out in amazement. "I am dumbfounded by your words," he said. "Nevertheless, I would like to hear how the Master would speak on this subject."

Ji Che said, "When a great sage rules the world, he makes the minds of his people free and far wandering. On this basis, he fashions teachings and simplifies customs, wiping out all treason from their minds and allowing each to pursue his own will. All is done in accordance with the inborn nature, and yet the people do not know why it is like this. Proceeding in this way, what need has he either to revere the way in which Yao and Shun taught their people or to look down on it in lofty contempt? His only desire is for unity with Virtue and the repose of the mind."

Zigong traveled south to Chu, and on his way back through Jin, as he passed along the south bank of the Han, he saw an old man preparing his fields for planting. He had hollowed out an opening by which he entered the well and from which he emerged, lugging a pitcher, which he carried out to water the fields. Grunting and puffing, he used up a great deal of energy and produced very little result.

"There is a machine for this sort of thing," said Zigong. "In one day it can water a hundred fields, demanding very little effort and producing excellent results. Wouldn't you like one?"

The gardener raised his head and looked at Zigong. "How does it work?"

"It's a contraption made by shaping a piece of wood. The back end is heavy and the front end light and it raises the water as though it were pouring it out, so fast that it seems to boil right over! It's called a well sweep."

The gardener flushed with anger and then said with a laugh, "I've heard my teacher say, where there are machines, there are bound to be machine worries; where there are machine worries, there are bound to be machine hearts. With a machine heart in your breast, you've spoiled what was pure and simple, and without the pure and simple, the life of the spirit knows no rest. Where the life of the spirit knows no rest, the Way will cease to buoy you up. It's not that I don't know about your machine—I would be ashamed to use it!"

Zigong blushed with chagrin, looked down, and made no reply. After a while, the gardener said, "Who are you, anyway?"

"A disciple of Kong Qiu."[12]

"Oh—then you must be one of those who broaden their learning in order to ape the sages, heaping absurd nonsense on the crowd, plucking the strings and singing sad songs all by yourself in hopes of buying fame in the world! You would do best to forget your spirit and breath, break up your body and limbs—then you might be able to get somewhere. You don't even know how to look after your own body—how do you have any time to think about looking after the world! On your way now! Don't interfere with my work!"

Zigong frowned, and the color drained from his face. Dazed and rattled, he couldn't seem to pull himself together, and it was only after he had walked on for some thirty *li* that he began to recover.

One of his disciples said, "Who was that man just now? Why did you change your expression and lose your color like that, Master, so that it took you all day to get back to normal?"

"I used to think there was only one real man in the world," said Zigong. "I didn't know that there was this other one. I have heard Confucius say that in affairs you aim for what is right, and in undertakings you aim for success. To spend little effort and achieve big results—that is the Way of the sage. Now it seems that this isn't so. He who holds fast to the Way is complete in Virtue; being complete in Virtue, he is complete in body; being complete in body, he is complete in spirit; and to be complete in spirit is the Way of the sage. He is content to live among the people, to walk by their side, and never know where he is going. Witless, his purity is complete. Achievement, profit, machines, skill—they have no place in this man's mind! A man like this will not go where he has no will to go, will not do what he has no mind to do. Though the world might praise him and say he had really found something, he would look unconcerned and never turn his head; though the world might condemn him and say he had lost something, he would look serene and pay no heed. The praise and blame of the world are no loss or gain to him. He may be called a man of Complete Virtue. I—I am a man of the wind-blown waves."

When Zigong got back to Lu, he reported the incident to Confucius. Confucius said, "He is one of those bogus practitioners of the arts of Mr. Chaos.[13] He knows the first thing but doesn't understand the second. He looks after what is on the inside but doesn't look after what is on the outside. A man of true brightness and purity who can enter into simplicity, who can return to the primitive through inaction, give body to his inborn nature, and embrace his spirit, and in this way wander through the everyday world—if you had met one like that, you would have had real cause for astonishment.[14] As for the arts of Mr. Chaos, you and I need not bother to find out about them."

Zhun Mang was on his way east to the Great Valley of the sea when he happened to meet Yuan Feng by the shore of the eastern ocean.[15] Yuan Feng said, "Where are you going?"

"I'm going to the Great Valley."

"What will you do there?"

"The Great Valley is the sort of thing you can pour into and it never gets full, dip from and it never runs dry. I'm going to wander there."

Yuan Feng said, "Don't you care about what happens to ordinary men? Please, won't you tell me about the government of the sage?"

"The government of the sage?" said Zhun Mang. "Assign offices so that no abilities are overlooked; promote men so that no talents are neglected. Always know the true facts, and let men do what they are best at. When actions and words proceed properly and the world is transformed, then at a wave of the hand or a tilt of the chin, all the people of the four directions will come flocking to you. This is called the government of the sage."

“May I ask about the man of Virtue?”

“The man of Virtue rests without thought, moves without plan. He has no use for right and wrong, beautiful and ugly. To share profit with all things within the four seas is his happiness, to look after their needs is his peace. Sad faced, he’s like a little child who has lost his mother. Bewildered, he’s like a traveler who has lost his way. He has more than enough wealth and goods, but he doesn’t know where they come from. He gets all he needs to eat and drink, but he doesn’t know how he gets it. This is called the manner of the man of Virtue.”

“May I ask about the man of spirit?”

“He lets his spirit ascend and mount on the light; with his bodily form, he dissolves and is gone. This is called the Illumination of Vastness. He lives out his fate, follows to the end his true form, and rests in the joy of Heaven and earth while the ten thousand cares melt away. So all things return to their true form. This is called Muddled Darkness.”

Men Wugui and Chizhang Manqui were watching the troops of King Wu.[16] Chizhang Manqui said, “He is no match for the man of the Yu clan. That’s why he runs into all this trouble!”

Men Wugui said, “Was the world already in good order when the man of the Yu clan came along to order it? Or was it in disorder, and later he brought it in order?”

Chizhang Manqui said, “Everybody wants to see the world well ordered. If it had been so already, what point would there have been in calling on the man of the Yu clan? The man of the Yu clan was medicine to a sore. But to wait until you go bald and then buy a wig, to wait until you get sick and then call for a doctor, to prepare the medicine like a true filial son and present it to your loving father, wearing a grim and haggard look—this the true sage would be ashamed to do. In an age of Perfect Virtue, the worthy are not honored; the talented are not employed. Rulers are like the high branches of a tree; the people, like the deer of the fields. They do what is right, but they do not know that this is righteousness. They love one another, but they do not know that this is benevolence. They are truehearted but do not know that this is loyalty. They are trustworthy but do not know that this is good faith. They wriggle around like insects, performing services for one another, but do not know that they are being kind. Therefore they move without leaving any trail behind, act without leaving any memory of their deeds.”

When a filial son does not fawn on his parents, when a loyal minister does not flatter his lord, they are the finest of sons and ministers. He who agrees with everything his parents say and approves of everything they do is regarded by popular opinion as an unworthy son; he who agrees with everything his lord says and approves of everything his lord does is regarded by popular opinion as an unworthy minister.[17] But in other cases, men do not realize that the same principle should apply. If a man agrees with everything that popular opinion says and regards as good everything that popular opinion regards as good, he is not, as you might expect, called a sycophant and a flatterer. Are we to assume, then, that popular opinion commands more authority than one’s parents or is more to be honored than one’s lord?

Call a man a sycophant, and he flushes with anger; call him a flatterer, and he turns crimson with rage. Yet all his life, he will continue to be a sycophant; all his life, he will continue to be a flatterer. See him set forth his analogies and polish his fine phrases to draw a crowd, until the beginning and end, the root and branches of his argument no longer match![18] See him spread out his robes, display his bright colors, put on a solemn face in hopes of currying favor with the age—and yet he does not recognize himself as a sycophant or a flatterer. See him with his followers laying down the law on right and wrong, and yet he does not recognize himself as one of the mob. This is the height of foolishness!

He who knows he is a fool is not the biggest fool; he who knows he is confused is not in the worst confusion. The man in the worst confusion will end his life without ever getting straightened out; the biggest fool will end his life without ever seeing the light. If three men are traveling along and one is confused, they will still get where they are going—because confusion is in the minority. But if two of them are confused, then they can walk until they are exhausted and never get anywhere—because confusion is in the majority. And with all the confusion in the world these days, no matter how often I point the way, it does no good. Sad, is it not?

Great music is lost on the ears of the villagers, but play them "The Breaking of the Willow" or "Bright Flowers," and they grin from ear to ear. In the same way, lofty words make no impression on the minds of the mob. Superior words gain no hearing because vulgar words are in the majority. It is like the case of the two travelers tramping along in confusion and never getting where they are going.[19] With all the confusion in the world these days, no matter how often I point the way, what good does it do? And if I know it does no good and still make myself do it, this too is a kind of confusion. So it is best to leave things alone and not force them. If I don't force things, at least I won't cause anyone any worry.

When the leper woman gives birth to a child in the dead of the night, she rushes to fetch a torch and examine it, trembling with terror lest it look like herself.[20]

The hundred-year-old tree is hacked up to make bowls for the sacrificial wine, blue and yellow with patterns on them, and the chips are thrown into the ditch. Compare the sacrificial bowls with the chips in the ditch, and you will find them far apart in beauty and ugliness; yet they are alike in having lost their inborn nature. Robber Zhi, Zeng, and Shi are far apart in deeds and righteousness, and yet they are the same in having lost their inborn nature. There are five conditions under which the inborn nature is lost. One: when the five colors confuse the eye and cause the eyesight to be unclear. Two: when the five notes confuse the ear and cause the hearing to be unclear. Three: when the five odors stimulate the nose and produce weariness and congestion in the forehead. Four: when the five flavors dull the mouth, causing the sense of taste to be impaired and lifeless. Five: when likes and dislikes unsettle the mind and cause the inborn nature to become volatile and flighty. These five all are a danger to life. And yet the followers of Yangzi and Mozi go

striding around, thinking they have really gotten hold of something.[21] This is not what I call getting hold of something.

If what you have gotten has gotten you into trouble, then can you really be said to have gotten something? If so, then the pigeons and doves in their cage have also gotten hold of something. With likes and dislikes, sounds and colors, you cripple what is on the inside; with leather caps and snipe-feathered bonnets, batons stuck in belts and sashes trailing, you cramp what is on the outside. The inside hemmed in by pickets and pegs, the outside heaped with wraps and swathes, and still you stand in this tangle of wraps and swathes and declare that you have gotten hold of something? If so, then the condemned men with their chained wrists and manacled fingers, the tiger and the leopard in their pens and prisons, have also gotten hold of something![22]

1. Perhaps a reference to the Confucian doctrine of the rectification of names, that is, the necessity to make certain that the one who is called "ruler" is in fact a true ruler, etc. The writer of this chapter seems to be attempting to effect a compromise between Daoist and Confucian ideals of government.

2. *Yi*, elsewhere translated as "righteousness."

3. As pointed out by commentators, the position of the *de* and that of the *dao* in the next sentence should be reversed to match the order of the sorites that follows. But the text is probably faulty.

4. It is not known what "Record" the writer is quoting.

5. The Master has been variously identified as Laozi, Zhuangzi, or Confucius.

6. Compare *Daodejing* XXI: "shadowy and indistinct, within it is a thing; dim and dark, within it is an essence."

7. That is, he accommodates himself to external phenomena as a traveler accommodates himself to the conditions of the journey. In the main, I follow Fukunaga's interpretation, though the sentence is very obscure.

8. Following Ma Xulun, I read *bang* (slander) in place of *fang*.

9. Following Sun Yirang, I read *lei* in place of *si*; compare the parallel passage on p. 56.

10. Confucius's familiar name. In using it to address Confucius face to face, Laozi is expressing great familiarity and/or contempt.

11. Following texts that read *ju* (agitated) in place of *chu*.

12. Confucius.

13. On Mr. Chaos (Hundun), see p. 59.

14. That is, the true man of the Way does not retire from the world or reject society and its inventions.

15. The names of the persons in the anecdote are allegorical, Zhun Mang meaning something like “Artless and Forgetful” and Yuan Feng meaning “Little Wind.”

16. If they were viewing the actual troops, the episode must be set in the eleventh century BCE, when King Wu of the Zhou attacked and overthrew the last ruler of the Shang dynasty. But perhaps they were watching the court dances performed in later ages that reenacted the campaign. The “man of the Yu clan” in the following sentence is the sage ruler who did not have to launch any military expeditions.

17. Because it is the duty of the son and minister to reprimand his parents and lord, respectively, when they are clearly in the wrong.

18. Following texts that omit the *zui* and adopting Chu Boxiu’s interpretation; the reference is apparently to the rhetoricians.

19. Following Lu Deming’s emendations.

20. Is this sentence intended to belong with what precedes it or with what follows it? I am unable to tell.

21. On Yangzi and Mozi, see p. 61, n. 7. They preached acceptance and rejection, repectively, of sensual pleasure.

22. These last two paragraphs, with their mention of Robber Zhi, Zeng, and Shi, and discussion of the five notes, flavors, etc., are close in thought and terminology to the preceding sections. Speculation is that they originally belonged to either sec. 9 or sec. 11.

13

THE WAY OF HEAVEN

It is the Way of heaven to keep moving and to allow no piling up—hence the ten thousand things come to completion. It is the Way of the emperor to keep moving and to allow no piling up—hence the whole world repairs to his court. It is the Way of the sage to keep moving and to allow no piling up—hence all within the seas bow to him. Comprehending Heaven, conversant with the sage, walker in the six avenues and four frontiers of the Virtue of emperors and kings—the actions of such a man come naturally; dreamily, he never lacks stillness.

The sage is still not because he takes stillness to be good and therefore is still. The ten thousand things are insufficient to distract his mind—that is the reason he is still. Water that is still gives back a clear image of beard and eyebrows; reposing in the water level, it offers a measure to the great carpenter. And if water in stillness possesses such clarity, how much more must pure spirit. The sage's mind in stillness is the mirror of Heaven and earth, the glass of the ten thousand things.

Emptiness, stillness, limpidity, silence, inaction—these are the level of Heaven and earth, the substance of the Way and its Virtue. Therefore the emperor, the king, the sage rest in them. Resting, they may be empty; empty, they may be full; and fullness is completion.[1] Empty, they may be still; still, they may move; moving, they may acquire. Still, they may rest in inaction; resting in inaction, they may demand success from those who are charged with activities. Resting in inaction, they may be merry; being merry, they may shun the place of care and anxiety, and the years of their life will be long.

Emptiness, stillness, limpidity, silence, inaction are the root of the ten thousand things. To understand them and face south is to become a ruler such as Yao was; to understand them and face north is to become a minister such as Shun was.[2] To hold them in high station is the Virtue of emperors and kings, of the Son of Heaven; to hold them in lowly station is the way of the dark sage, the uncrowned king. Retire with them to a life of idle wandering, and you will command first place among the recluses of the rivers and seas, the hills and forests. Come forward with them to succor the age, and your success will be great, your name renowned, and the world will be united. In stillness you will be a sage, in action a king. Resting in inaction, you will be honored; of unwrought simplicity, your beauty will be such that no one in the world may vie with you.

He who has a clear understanding of the Virtue of Heaven and earth may be called the Great Source, the Great Ancestor. He harmonizes with Heaven; and by doing so he brings

equitable accord to the world and harmonizes with men as well. To harmonize with men is called human joy; to harmonize with Heaven is called Heavenly joy. Zhuangzi has said, "This Teacher of mine, this Teacher of mine—he passes judgment on the ten thousand things, but he doesn't think himself severe; his bounty extends to ten thousand generations, but he doesn't think himself benevolent. He is older than the highest antiquity, but he doesn't think himself long-lived; he covers heaven, bears up the earth, carves and fashions countless forms, but he doesn't think himself skilled."[3] This is what is called Heavenly joy.

So it is said, for him who understands Heavenly joy, life is the working of Heaven; death is the transformation of things. In stillness, he and the yin share a single Virtue; in motion, he and the yang share a single flow. Thus he who understands Heavenly joy incurs no wrath from Heaven, no opposition from man, no entanglement from things, no blame from the spirits. So it is said, his movement is of Heaven, his stillness of earth. With his single mind in repose, he is king of the world; the spirits do not afflict him; his soul knows no weariness. His single mind reposed, the ten thousand things submit—which is to say that his emptiness and stillness reach throughout Heaven and earth and penetrate the ten thousand things. This is what is called Heavenly joy. Heavenly joy is the mind of the sage by which he shepherds the world.

The Virtue of emperors and kings takes Heaven and earth as its ancestor, the Way and its Virtue as its master, inaction as its constant rule. With inaction, you may make the world work for you and have leisure to spare; with action, you will find yourself working for the world and never will it be enough. Therefore the men of old prized inaction.

If superiors adopt inaction and inferiors adopt inaction as well, then inferior and superior will share the same virtue; and if inferior and superior share the same virtue, there will be none to act as minister. If inferiors adopt action and superiors adopt action as well, then superior and inferior will share the same way; and if superior and inferior share the same way, there will be none to act as lord. Superiors must adopt inaction and make the world work for them; inferiors must adopt action and work for the world. This is an unvarying truth.

Therefore the kings of the world in ancient times, though their knowledge encompassed all Heaven and earth, did not of themselves lay plans; though their power of discrimination embraced[4] the ten thousand things, they did not of themselves expound any theories; though their abilities outshone all within the four seas, they did not of themselves act. Heaven does not give birth, yet the ten thousand things are transformed; earth does not sustain, yet the ten thousand things are nourished. The emperor and the king do not act, yet the world is benefited. So it is said, nothing so spiritual as Heaven, nothing so rich as earth, nothing so great as the emperor and the king. So it is said, the Virtue of the emperor and the king is the counterpart of Heaven and earth. This is the way to mount Heaven and earth, to make the ten thousand things gallop, to employ the mass of men.

The source rests with the superior, the trivia with the inferior; the essential resides in the ruler, the details in his ministers. The blandishments of the three armies and the five weapons—these are the trivia of Virtue. The doling out of rewards and punishments, benefit and loss, the five penalties—these are the trivia of public instruction.[5] Rites and

laws, weights, measures, the careful comparison of forms and names[6]—these are the trivia of good government. The tones of bell and drum, the posturings of feather and tassel—these are the trivia of music.[7] Lamentation and coarse garments, the mourning periods of varying lengths—these are the trivia of grief. These five trivia must wait for the movement of pure spirit, for the vitality of the mind's art before they can command respect. The study of such trivia was known to antiquity, but the men of old gave them no precedence.

The ruler precedes, the minister follows; the father precedes, the son follows; the older brother precedes, the younger brother follows; the senior precedes, the junior follows; the man precedes, the woman follows; the husband precedes, the wife follows. Honor and lowliness, precedence and following, are part of the workings of Heaven and earth, and from them the sage draws his model.

Heaven is honorable, earth lowly—such are their ranks in spiritual enlightenment. Spring and summer precede, autumn and winter follow—such is the sequence of the four seasons. The ten thousand things change and grow, their roots and buds, each with its distinctive form, flourishing and decaying by degree, a constant flow of change and transformation. If Heaven and earth, the loftiest in spirituality, have yet their sequence of honorable and lowly, of preceder and follower, how much more must the way of man! In the ancestral temple, honor is determined by degree of kinship; in the court, by degree of nobility; in the village, by degree of seniority; in the administration of affairs, by degree of worth. This is the sequence of the Great Way.

If you speak of the Way and not of its sequence, then it is not a way; and if you speak of a way that is not a way, then how can anyone make his way by it? Therefore the men of ancient times who clearly understood the Great Way first made clear Heaven and then went on to the Way and its Virtue. Having made clear the Way and its Virtue, they went on to benevolence and righteousness. Having made clear benevolence and righteousness, they went on to the observance of duties. Having made clear the observance of duties, they went on to forms and names. Having made clear forms and names, they went on to the assignment of suitable offices. Having made clear the assignment of suitable offices, they went on to the scrutiny of performance. Having made clear the scrutiny of performance, they went on to the judgment of right and wrong. Having made clear the judgment of right and wrong, they went on to rewards and punishments. Having made clear rewards and punishments, they could be certain that stupid and wise were in their proper place, that eminent and lowly were rightly ranked, that good and worthy men as well as unworthy ones showed their true form, that all had duties suited to their abilities, that all acted in accordance with their titles. It was in this way that superiors were served, inferiors were shepherded, external things were ordered, the inner man was trained. Knowledge and scheming were unused, yet all found rest in Heaven. This was called the Great Peace, the Highest Government. Hence the book says, "There are forms and there are names."[8] Forms and names were known to antiquity, but the men of old gave them no precedence.

Those who spoke of the Great Way in ancient times could count to five in the sequence [described earlier] and pick out "forms and names" or count to nine and discuss "rewards and punishments." But to jump right in and talk about "forms and names" is to lack an

understanding of the source; to jump right in and talk about "rewards and punishments" is to lack an understanding of the beginning. Those who stand the Way on its head before describing it, who turn it backward before expounding it, may be brought to order by others, but how could they be capable of bringing others to order? Those who jump right in and talk about "forms and names," "rewards and punishments," have an understanding of the tools for bringing order but no understanding of the way to bring order. They may work for the world, but they are not worthy to make the world work for them. They are rhetoricians, scholars cramped in one corner of learning. Rites and laws, weights and measures, the careful comparison of forms and names—the men of old had all these. They are the means by which those below serve those above, not the means by which those above shepherd those below.

Long ago Shun asked Yao, "As Heaven-appointed king, how do you use your mind?"

Yao replied, "I never abuse those who have nowhere to sue nor reject the poor people. Grieving for the dead, comforting the orphan, pitying the widow—I use my mind in these things alone."

Shun said, "Admirable as far as admirableness goes. But not yet great."

Yao said, "Then what should I do?"

Shun said, "Heaven raised on high, earth in peace,[9] sun and moon shining, the four seasons marching—if you could be like the constant succession of day and night, the clouds that move, the rains that fall!"

"And to think I have been going to all this bustle and bother!" said Yao. "You are one who joins with Heaven; I am one who joins with man."

Heaven and earth have been called great since ancient times, have been praised in chorus by the Yellow Emperor, Yao, and Shun. The kings of the world in ancient times—what need had they for action? Heaven and earth was enough for them.

Confucius went west to deposit his works with the royal house of Zhou. Zilu advised him, saying, "I have heard that the Keeper of the Royal Archives is one Lao Dan, now retired and living at home. If you wish to deposit your works, you might try going to see him about it."

"Excellent!" said Confucius and went to see Lao Dan, but Lao Dan would not give permission. Thereupon Confucius unwrapped his Twelve Classics and began expounding them.[10] Halfway through the exposition, Lao Dan said, "This will take forever! Just let me hear the gist of the thing!"

"The gist of it," said Confucius, "is benevolence and righteousness."

"May I ask if benevolence and righteousness belong to the inborn nature of man?" said Lao Dan.

"Of course," said Confucius. "If the gentleman lacks benevolence, he will get nowhere; if he lacks righteousness, he cannot even stay alive. Benevolence and righteousness are truly the inborn nature of man. What else could they be?"

Lao Dan said, "May I ask your definition of benevolence and righteousness?"

Confucius said, “To be glad and joyful[11] in mind, to embrace universal love and be without partisanship—this is the true form of benevolence and righteousness.”

Lao Dan said, “Hmm—close—except for the last part. ‘Universal love’—that’s a rather nebulous ideal, isn’t it? And to be without partisanship is already a kind of partisanship. Do you want to keep the world from losing its simplicity?[12] Heaven and earth hold fast to their constant ways, the sun and moon to their brightness, the stars and planets to their ranks, the birds and beasts to their flocks, the trees and shrubs to their stands. You have only to go along with Virtue in your actions, to follow the Way in your journey, and already you will be there. Why these flags of benevolence and righteousness so bravely up-raised, as though you were beating a drum and searching for a lost child? Ah, you will bring confusion to the nature of man!”

* * *

Shi Chengqi went to see Laozi. “I had heard that you were a sage,” he said, “and so, without minding how long the road was, I came to beg an interview—a hundred nights along the way, feet covered with calluses, and yet I did not dare to stop and rest. Now that I see you, though, I find you are no sage at all. Rat holes heaped with leftover grain, and yet you turn your little sister out of the house, an unkind act indeed! More raw and cooked food in front of you than you can ever get through, and yet you go on endlessly hoarding goods!”[13] Laozi looked blank and made no reply.

The following day, Shi Chengqi came to see him again and said, “Yesterday I was very sharp with you, but now I have no heart for that sort of thing.[14] I wonder why that is?”

Laozi said, “Artful wisdom, the spirit-like sage—I hope I have shuffled off categories of that sort! If you’d called me an ox, I’d have said I was an ox; if you’d called me a horse, I’d have said I was a horse. If the reality is there and you refuse to accept the name that men give it, you’ll only lay yourself open to double harassment. My submission is a constant submission; I do not submit because I think it’s time to submit.”

Shi Chengqi backed respectfully away so that he would not tread on Laozi’s shadow and then advanced once more in a humble manner and asked how he should go about cultivating his person.

Laozi said, “Your face is grim, your eyes are fierce, your forehead is broad, your mouth is gaping, your manner is overbearing, like a horse held back by a tether, watching for a chance to bolt, bounding off as though shot from a crossbow. Scrutinizing ever so carefully, crafty in wisdom, parading your arrogance—all this invites mistrust. Up in the borderlands, a man like you would be taken for a thief!”

The Master said: The Way does not falter before the huge, is not forgetful of the tiny; therefore the ten thousand things are complete in it. Vast and ample, there is nothing it does not receive. Deep and profound, how can it be fathomed? Punishment and favor,[15] benevolence and righteousness—these are trivia to the spirit, and yet who but the Perfect Man can put them in their rightful place?

When the Perfect Man rules the world, he has hold of a huge thing, does he not?—yet it is not enough to snare him in entanglement. He works the handles that control the world but is not a party to the workings. He sees clearly into what has no falsehood and is unswayed by thoughts of gain. He ferrets out the truth of things and knows how to cling to the source. Therefore he can put Heaven and earth outside himself, forget the ten thousand things, and his spirit has no cause to be wearied. He dismisses benevolence and righteousness, rejects[16] rites and music, for the mind of the Perfect Man knows where to find repose.

Men of the world who value the Way all turn to books. But books are nothing more than words. Words have value; what is of value in words is meaning. Meaning has something it is pursuing, but the thing that it is pursuing cannot be put into words and handed down. The world values words and hands down books, but although the world values them, I do not think them worth valuing. What the world takes to be value is not real value.

What you can look at and see are forms and colors; what you can listen to and hear are names and sounds. What a pity!—that the men of the world should suppose that form and color, name and sound, are sufficient to convey the truth of a thing. It is because in the end, they are not sufficient to convey truth that "those who know do not speak, those who speak do not know."[17] But how can the world understand this!

Duke Huan was in his hall reading a book. The wheel-wright Pian, who was in the yard below chiseling a wheel, laid down his mallet and chisel, stepped up into the hall, and said to Duke Huan, "This book Your Grace is reading—may I venture to ask whose words are in it?"

"The words of the sages," said the duke.

"Are the sages still alive?"

"Dead long ago," said the duke.

"In that case, what you are reading there is nothing but the chaff and dregs of the men of old!"

"Since when does a wheelwright have permission to comment on the books I read?" said Duke Huan. "If you have some explanation, well and good. If not, it's your life!"

Wheelwright Pian said, "I look at it from the point of view of my own work. When I chisel a wheel, if the blows of the mallet are too gentle, the chisel will slide and won't take hold. But if they're too hard, it will bite and won't budge. Not too gentle, not too hard—you can get it in your hand and feel it in your mind. You can't put it into words, and yet there's a knack to it somehow. I can't teach it to my son, and he can't learn it from me. So I've gone along for seventy years, and at my age I'm still chiseling wheels. When the men of old died, they took with them the things that couldn't be handed down. So what you are reading there must be nothing but the chaff and dregs of the men of old."

1. Following texts that read *bei* in place of *lun*.

2. Shun served as a minister under Yao before Yao ceded the throne to him; hence here he represents the ideal minister.

3. See p. 52, where these words are attributed to Xu You.

4. Reading *zhou* instead of *diao* in accordance with Zhang Binglin's interpretation.

5. The "three armies" refers to the three-divisioned army of a feudal state. The five weapons are usually listed as spear, halberd, battle-ax, shield, and bow, though there are other lists. The five penalties are usually given as tattooing, cutting off the nose, cutting off the feet, castration, and death.

6. That is, the correspondence between an official's title and his actual performance in office, an important principle in Legalist doctrine.

7. Music here includes the dance, in which feathers and tassels made of yak tails were used.

8. It is not known what book the writer is quoting. The whole passage appears to be an attempt to combine Daoist, Confucian, and Legalist terminology and concepts of government into one comprehensive system, the sort of eclecticism often found in thinkers of the Qin and early Han.

9. Reading *deng* in place of *de*, and *tu* in place of *chu*, in accordance with the emendations by Zhang Binglin and Sun Yirang, respectively.

10. There are various explanations of the phrase "Twelve Classics," for example, the Six Confucian Classics with six commentaries, or the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, which covers the reigns of twelve dukes of Lu.

11. Reading *yi* (pleased) in place of *wu* in accordance with Zhang Binglin's emendation.

12. Reading *pu* in place of *mu* to correspond to the parallel sentence in sec. 14, p. 115.

13. One can easily gather from the *Daodejing* that Laozi favored frugality, but nothing is known about these legends of his personal stinginess and lack of charity to his little sister.

14. Following Ma Xulun's emendation and interpretation.

15. A Legalist term; see *Han Feizi*, sec. 7, where punishment and favor are called "the two handles" of political power.

16. Reading *bin* with the hand radical.

17. The section in quotation marks is identical with the beginning of *Daodejing* LVI.

14

THE TURNING OF HEAVEN

Does heaven turn? Does the earth sit still? Do sun and moon compete for a place to shine? Who masterminds all this? Who pulls the strings? Who, resting inactive himself, gives the push that makes it go this way? I wonder, is there some mechanism that works it and won't let it stop? I wonder if it just rolls and turns and can't bring itself to a halt? Do the clouds make the rain, or does the rain make the clouds? Who puffs them up, who showers them down like this? Who, resting inactive himself, stirs up all this lascivious joy?[1] The winds rise in the north, blowing now west, now east, whirling up to wander on high. Whose breaths and exhalations are they? Who, resting inactive himself, huffs and puffs them about like this?

The shaman Xian beckoned[2] and said, "Come—I will tell you. Heaven has the six directions and the five constants.[3] When emperors and kings go along with these, there is good order; when they move contrary to these, there is disaster. With the instructions of the Nine Luo,[4] order can be made to reign and virtue completed. The ruler will shine mirror-like over the earth below, and the world will bear him up. He may be called an August One on high."[5]

Tang, the prime minister of Shang,[6] asked Zhuangzi about benevolence.

Zhuangzi said, "Tigers and wolves—they're benevolent."

"How can you say that?"

Zhuangzi said, "Sire and cubs warm and affectionate with one another—why do you say they're not benevolent?"

"What I am asking to hear about is perfect benevolence."

"Perfect benevolence knows no affection," said Zhuangzi.

The prime minister said, "I have heard that where affection is lacking, there will be no love, and if there is no love, there will be no filial piety. Can you possibly say that perfect benevolence is unfilial?"

"No, no," said Zhuangzi. "Perfect benevolence is a lofty thing—words like filial piety would never do to describe it. And what you are talking about is not something that surpasses filial piety but something that doesn't even come up to it. If a traveler to the south turns to look north again when he reaches the city of Ying, he will no longer see the dark northern mountains. Why? Because they are too far away. Thus it is said, to be filial

out of respect is easy; to be filial out of love is hard. To be filial out of love is easy; to forget parents is hard. To forget parents is easy; to make parents forget you is hard. To make parents forget you is easy; to forget the whole world is hard. To forget the whole world is easy; to make the whole world forget you is hard. Virtue discards Yao and Shun and rests in inaction. Its bounty enriches ten thousand ages, and yet no one in the world knows this. Why all these deep sighs, this talk of benevolence and filial piety? Filial piety, brotherliness, benevolence, righteousness, loyalty, trust, honor, integrity—for all of these, you must drive yourself and make a slave of Virtue. They are not worth prizing. So it is said, Highest eminence scorns the titles of the kingdom; greatest wealth rejects the riches of the kingdom; loftiest desire ignores fame and reputation. It is the Way alone that never varies."

Cheng of North Gate said to the Yellow Emperor, "When Your Majesty performed the Xianchi music in the wilds around Lake Dongting, I listened, and at first I was afraid. I listened some more and felt weary, and then I listened to the end and felt confused. Overwhelmed, speechless, I couldn't get hold of myself."

"It's not surprising you felt that way," said the emperor. "I performed it through man, tuned it to Heaven, went forward with ritual principle, and established it in Great Purity. Perfect music must first respond to the needs of man, accord with the reason of Heaven, proceed by the Five Virtues, and blend with spontaneity; only then can it bring order to the four seasons and bestow a final harmony on the ten thousand things.[7] Then the four seasons will rise one after the other; the ten thousand things will take their turn at living. Now flourishing, now decaying, the civil and military strains will keep them in step; now with clear notes, now with dull ones, the yin and the yang will blend all in harmony, the sounds flowing forth like light, like hibernating insects that start to wriggle again, like the crash of thunder with which I awe the world. At the end, no tail; at the beginning, no head; now dead, now alive, now flat on the ground, now up on its feet, its constancy is unending, yet there is nothing that can be counted on. That's why you felt afraid.

"Then I played it with the harmony of yin and yang, lit it with the shining of sun and moon; its notes I was able to make long or short, yielding or strong, modulating about a single unity but bowing before no rule or constancy. In the valley they filled the valley; in the void they filled the void; plugging up the crevices, holding back the spirit, accepting things on their own terms. Its notes were clear and radiant,[8] its fame high and bright. Therefore the ghosts and spirits kept to their darkness, and the sun, moon, stars, and constellations marched in their orbits. I made it stop where there is an end to things, made it flow where there is no stopping. You[9] try to fathom it but can't understand, try to gaze at it but can't see, try to overtake it but can't catch up. You stand dazed before the four-directioned emptiness of the Way or lean on your desk and moan. Your eyes fail before you can see; your strength knuckles under before you can catch up.[10] It was nothing I could do anything about. Your body melted into the empty void, and this brought you to an idle freedom. It was this idle freedom that made you feel weary.

“Then I played it with unwearying notes and tuned it to the command of spontaneity. Therefore there seemed to be a chaos where things grow in thickets together, a maturity where nothing takes form, a universal plucking where nothing gets pulled, a clouded obscurity where there is no sound. It moved in no direction at all, rested in mysterious shadow. Some called it death, some called it life, some called it fruit, some called it flower. It flowed and scattered and bowed before no constant tone. The world, perplexed by it, went to the sage for instruction, for the sage is the comprehender of true form and the completer of fate. When the Heavenly mechanism is not put into action, and yet the five vital organs are all complete—this may be called the music of Heaven. Wordless, it delights the mind. Therefore the lord of Yan sang its praises thus: ‘Listen—you do not hear its sound; look—you do not see its form. It fills all Heaven and earth, enwraps all the six directions.’ You wanted to hear it but had no way to go about it. That was why you felt confused.[11]

“Music begins with fear, and because of this fear, there is dread, as of a curse. Then I add the weariness, and because of the weariness, there is compliance. I end it all with confusion, and because of the confusion, there is stupidity. And because of the stupidity, there is the Way, the Way that can be lifted up and carried around wherever you go.”

When Confucius was away in the west visiting the state of Wei, Yan Yuan said to Music Master Jin, “What do you think of my master’s trip?”[12]

Music Master Jin said, “A pity—your master will most likely end up in trouble.”

“How so?” asked Yan Yuan.

Music Master Jin said, “Before the straw dogs are presented at the sacrifice, they are stored in bamboo boxes and covered over with patterned embroidery, while the impersonator of the dead and the priest fast and practice austerities in preparation for fetching them. But after they have once been presented, then all that remains for them is to be trampled on, head and back, by passersby; to be swept up by the grass cutters and burned.[13] And if anyone should come along and put them back in their bamboo boxes, cover them over with patterned embroidery, and linger or lie down to sleep beneath them, he would dream no proper dreams; on the contrary, he would most certainly be visited again and again by nightmares.

“Now your master has picked up some old straw dogs that had been presented by the former kings and has called together his disciples to linger and lie down in sleep beneath them. Therefore the people chopped down the tree on him in Song, wiped away his footprints in Wei, and made trouble for him in Shang and Zhou—such were the dreams he had. They besieged him between Chen and Cai, and for seven days he ate no cooked food, till he hovered on the border between life and death—such were the nightmares he had.[14]

“Nothing is as good as a boat for crossing water, nothing as good as a cart for crossing land. But although a boat will get you over water, if you try to push it across land, you may push till your dying day and hardly move it any distance at all. And are the past and present not like the water and the land, and the states of Zhou and Lu not like a boat and a cart? To hope to practice the ways of Zhou in the state of Lu is like trying to push a boat over land

—a great deal of work, no success, and certain danger to the person who tries it. The man who tries to do so has failed to understand the turning that has no direction, that responds to things and is never at a loss.

"Have you never seen a well sweep? Pull it, and down it goes; let go, and up it swings. It allows itself to be pulled around by men; it doesn't try to pull them. So it can go up and down and never be blamed by anybody.

"Thus it is that the rituals and regulations of the Three August Ones and the Five Emperors are prized not because they were uniform but because they were capable of bringing about order.[15] The rituals and regulations of the Three August Ones and the Five Emperors may be compared to the haw, the pear, the orange, and the citron. Their flavors are quite different, yet all are pleasing to the mouth. Rituals and regulations are something that change in response to the times. If you take a monkey and dress him in the robes of the Duke of Zhou, he will bite and tear at them, not satisfied until he has divested himself of every stitch. And a glance will show that past and present are no more alike than are a monkey and the Duke of Zhou!

"The beautiful Xishi, troubled with heartburn, frowned at her neighbors. An ugly woman of the neighborhood, seeing that Xishi was beautiful, went home and likewise pounded her breast and frowned at her neighbors. But at the sight of her, the rich men of the neighborhood shut tight their gates and would not venture out, while the poor men grabbed their wives and children by the hand and scampered off. The woman understood that someone frowning could be beautiful, but she did not understand where the beauty of the frown came from. A pity, indeed! Your master is going to end up in trouble!"

Confucius had gone along until he was fifty-one and had still not heard the Way. Finally he went south to Pei and called on Lao Dan. "Ah, you have come," said Lao Dan. "I've heard that you are a worthy man of the northern region. Have you found the Way?"

"Not yet," said Confucius.

"Where did you look for it?" asked Lao Dan.

"I looked for it in rules and regulations, but five years went by and I still hadn't found it."

"Where else did you look for it?" asked Lao Dan.

"I looked for it in the yin and yang, but twelve years went by and I still hadn't found it."

"It stands to reason!" said Lao Dan. "If the Way could be presented, there is no man who would not present it to his ruler. If the Way could be offered, there is no man who would not offer it to his parents. If the Way could be reported, there is no man who would not report it to his brothers. If the Way could be bequeathed, there is no man who would not bequeath it to his heirs. But it cannot—and for none other than the following reason: If there is no host on the inside to receive it, it will not stay; if there is no mark on the outside to guide it, it will not go. If what is brought forth from the inside is not received on the outside, then the sage will not bring it forth. If what is taken in from the outside is not received by a host on the inside, the sage will not entrust it.[16]

“Fame is a public weapon—don’t reach for it too often. Benevolence and righteousness are the grass huts of the former kings; you may stop in them for one night, but you mustn’t tarry there for long. A lengthy stay would invite many reproaches. The Perfect Man of ancient times used benevolence as a path to be borrowed, righteousness as a lodge to take shelter in. He wandered in the free and easy wastes, ate in the plain and simple fields, and strolled in the garden of no bestowal. Free and easy, he rested in inaction; plain and simple, it was not hard for him to live; bestowing nothing, he did not have to hand things out. The men of old called this the wandering of the Truth-Picker.

“He who considers wealth a good thing can never bear to give up his income; he who considers eminence a good thing can never bear to give up his fame. He who has a taste for power can never bear to hand over authority to others. Holding tight to these things, such men shiver with fear; should they let them go, they would pine in sorrow. They never stop for a moment of reflection, never cease to gaze with greedy eyes—they are men punished by Heaven. Resentment and kindness, taking away and giving, reproof and instruction, life and death—these eight things are the weapons of the corrector.[17] Only he who complies with the Great Change and allows no blockage will be able to use them. Therefore it is said, The corrector must be correct. If the mind cannot accept this fact, then the doors of Heaven will never open!”

Confucius called on Lao Dan and spoke to him about benevolence and righteousness. Lao Dan said, “Chaff from the winnowing fan can so blind the eye that heaven, earth, and the four directions all seem to shift place. A mosquito or a horsefly stinging your skin can keep you awake a whole night. And when benevolence and righteousness in all their fearfulness come to muddle the mind,[18] the confusion is unimaginable. If you want to keep the world from losing its simplicity, you must move with the freedom of the wind, stand in the perfection of Virtue. Why all this huffing and puffing, as though you were carrying a big drum and searching for a lost child! The snow goose needs no daily bath to stay white; the crow needs no daily inking to stay black. Black and white in their simplicity offer no ground for argument; fame and reputation in their clamorousness[19] offer no ground for envy. When the springs dry up and the fish are left stranded on the ground, they spew one another with moisture and wet one another down with spit—but it would be much better if they could forget one another in the rivers and lakes!”

When Confucius returned from his visit with Lao Dan, he did not speak for three days. His disciples said, “Master, you’ve seen Lao Dan—what estimation would you make of him?”

Confucius said, “At last I may say that I have seen a dragon—a dragon that coils to show his body at its best, that sprawls out to display his patterns at their best, riding on the breath of the clouds, feeding on the yin and yang. My mouth fell open and I couldn’t close it; my tongue flew up and I couldn’t even stammer. How could I possibly make any estimation of Lao Dan!”

Zigong said, “Then is it true that the Perfect Man can command corpse-like stillness and dragon vision, the voice of thunder and the silence of deep pools; that he breaks forth into

movement like Heaven and earth? If only I, too, could get to see him!"

In the end, he went with an introduction from Confucius and called on Lao Dan. Lao Dan was about to sit down in the hall and stretch out his legs. In a small voice he said, "I've lived to see a great many years come and go. What advice is it you have for me?"

Zigong said, "The Three August Ones and the Five Emperors ruled the world in ways that were not the same, though they were alike in the praise and acclaim they won. I am told, sir, that you alone do not regard them as sages. May I ask why?"

Lao Dan said, "Young man, come a little closer! Why do you say that they ruled in ways that were not the same?"

"Yao ceded the throne to Shun, and Shun ceded it to Yu. Yu wore himself out over it, and Tang even resorted to war. King Wen obeyed Zhou and did not dare to rebel; but his son King Wu turned against Zhou and refused to remain loyal. Therefore I say that they were not the same."

Lao Dan said, "Young man, come a little closer, and I will tell you how the Three August Ones and the Five Emperors ruled the world. In ancient times the Yellow Emperor ruled the world by making the hearts of the people one. Therefore, if there were those among the people who did not wail at the death of their parents, the people saw nothing wrong in this. Yao ruled the world by making the hearts of the people affectionate. Therefore, if there were those among the people who decided to mourn for longer or shorter periods according to the degree of kinship of the deceased, the people saw nothing wrong in this. Shun ruled the world by making the hearts of the people rivalrous. Therefore the wives of the people became pregnant and gave birth in the tenth month as in the past, but their children were not five months old before they were able to talk, and their baby laughter had hardly rung out before they had begun to distinguish one person from another. It was then that premature death first appeared. Yu ruled the world by causing the hearts of the people to change. It was assumed that each man had a heart of his own, that recourse to arms was quite all right. Killing a thief is not a case of murder, they said; every man in the world should look out for his own kind. As a result, there was great consternation in the world, and the Confucians and Mohists all came forward, creating for the first time the rules of ethical behavior. But what would they say about those men who nowadays make wives of their daughters?[20]

"I will tell you how the Three August Ones and the Five Emperors ruled the world! They called it 'ruling,' but in fact they were plunging it into the worst confusion. The 'wisdom' of the Three August Ones was such as blotted out the brightness of sun and moon above, sapped the vigor of hills and streams below, and overturned the round of the four seasons in between. Their wisdom was more fearsome than the tail of the scorpion; down to the smallest beast, not a living thing was allowed to rest in the true form of its nature and fate. And yet they considered themselves sages! Was it not shameful—their lack of shame!"

Zigong, stunned and speechless, stood wondering which way to turn.

Confucius said to Lao Dan, "I have been studying the Six Classics—the *Odes*, the *Documents*, the *Ritual*, the *Music*, the *Changes*, and the *Spring and Autumn*, for what I

would call a long time, and I know their contents through and through. But I have been around to seventy-two different rulers with them, expounding the ways of the former kings and making clear the path trod by the dukes of Zhou and Shao, and yet not a single ruler has found anything to excite his interest. How difficult it is to persuade others, how difficult to make clear the Way!"

Laozi said, "It's lucky you didn't meet with a ruler who would try to govern the world as you say. The Six Classics are the old worn-out paths of the former kings—they are not the thing that walked the path. What you are expounding are simply these paths. Paths are made by shoes that walk them; they are by no means the shoes themselves!

"The white fish hawk has only to stare unblinking at its mate for fertilization to occur. With insects, the male cries on the wind above, the female cries on the wind below, and there is fertilization. The creature called the *lei* is both male and female, and so it can fertilize itself. Inborn nature cannot be changed, fate cannot be altered, time cannot be stopped, the Way cannot be obstructed. Get hold of the Way and there's nothing that can't be done; lose it and there's nothing that can be done."

Confucius stayed home for three months and then went to see Lao Dan once again. "I've got it," he said. "The magpie hatches its young; the fish spit out their milt; the slim-waisted wasp has its stages of transformation; and when baby brother is born, big brother howls.[21] For a long time now, I have not been taking my place as a man along with the process of change. And if I do not take my own place as a man along with the process of change, how can I hope to change other men?"

Laozi said, "Good, Qiu—now you've got it!"

1. The expression "clouds and rain" was used from early times to refer to sexual intercourse, and this may be why the writer employs the odd phrase "lascivious joy."

2. Reading *zhao* with the hand radical, as Ma Xulun suggested.

3. Usually taken to be the five elements of Chinese philosophy: wood, fire, earth, metal, and water.

4. Probably a reference to the "Great Plan" section of the *Book of Documents*, which is in nine divisions and was supposed to have been written on the back of a tortoise that emerged from the Luo River.

5. On the August Ones, see p. 113, n. 15.

6. Shang here presumably means the state of Song; see the introduction, p. viii.

7. The thirty-five characters that make up this sentence are omitted in some editions because there is strong suspicion that they are part of a commentary that was erroneously copied into the body of the text.

8. Following Ma Xulun's interpretation.

9. Following the texts that read *zi* instead of *yu*.

10. Since in the preceding passage, the order of the verbs was “understand,” “see,” and “catch up,” this sentence probably began originally with a clause describing Cheng’s inability to understand, of which only the single character *zhi* now remains.

11. As the reader well may feel at this point. On the whole, I follow Fukunaga in the interpretation of this difficult and deliberately paradoxical passage, though I am not confident that I really understand what it is all about. It should be noted that because the words for “joy” and “music” are written with the same character, phrases translated here as “perfect music,” “the music of Heaven,” etc., can also be interpreted to refer to the states of emotion. The phrase “perfect music” in fact appears later as the title of sec. 18, where I have rendered it as “Supreme Happiness.”

12. Yan Yuan, or Yan Hui, was Confucius’s favorite disciple. Music Master Jin was presumably an official of Confucius’s native state of Lu.

13. The straw dogs, also mentioned in *Daodejing* V, apparently acted as scapegoats to draw off evil influences at the sacrifice; hence they were treated with reverence before the sacrifice but thrown away afterward, and to attempt to put them back in their original boxes would only invite bad luck.

14. These various difficulties and persecutions that Confucius and his disciples encountered in their wanderings from state to state are mentioned in the *Analects* or other early texts; here, as earlier, the name Shang seems to stand for Song.

15. The Three August Ones (*huang*) and Five Emperors (*di*) are legendary sage rulers of high antiquity, though it is not certain just which of the numerous legendary rulers the writer would have included in his list of three and five. Later on in the chapter, the phrase seems to mean sage rulers in general.

16. There are other ways to interpret this perplexing passage. The point is that the Way can be transmitted only telepathically, and therefore the sage must make certain that the mind of the other party is capable of receiving it before he extracts it from his own mind and hands it over.

17. On one level, this refers to the ruler, who rules by means of punishments, rewards, etc.; *zheng* (to correct) is etymologically the same as *zheng* (to govern). On another level, the passage is talking about the enlightened man who has a “correct” understanding of the Way.

18. Following texts that read *kui* in place of *fen*.

19. Following texts that read *huan* in place of *guan*.

20. The sentence is obscure. It is apparent from Guo Xiang’s note that he took it as a reference to incest, although later commentators, repelled or unconvinced by his interpretation, have suggested various other interpretations or emendations.

21. That is, the older child is weaned when the younger is born; the phrase signifies mammalian birth, as opposed to the other three types of reproduction mentioned earlier.

15

CONSTRAINED IN WILL

To be constrained in will, lofty in action, aloof from the world, apart from its customs, elevated in discourse, sullen and critical, indignation his whole concern—such is the life favored by the scholar in his mountain valley, the man who condemns the world, the worn and haggard one who means to end it all with a plunge into the deep. To discourse on benevolence, righteousness, loyalty, and good faith, to be courteous, temperate, modest, and deferential, moral training his whole concern—such is the life favored by the scholar who seeks to bring the world to order, the man who teaches and instructs, who at home and abroad lives for learning. To talk of great accomplishments, win a great name, define the etiquette of ruler and subject, regulate the position of superior and inferior, the ordering of the state his only concern—such is the life favored by the scholar of court and council, the man who would honor his sovereign and strengthen his country, the bringer of accomplishment, the annexer of territory. To repair to the thickets and ponds, living idly in the wilderness, angling for fish in solitary places, inaction his only concern—such is the life favored by the scholar of the rivers and seas, the man who withdraws from the world, the unhurried idler. To pant, to puff, to hail, to sip, to spit out the old breath and draw in the new, practicing bear-hangings and bird-stretchings, longevity his only concern—such is the life favored by the scholar who practices Induction, the man who nourishes his body, who hopes to live to be as old as Pengcu.[1]

But to attain loftiness without constraining the will; to achieve moral training without benevolence and righteousness, good order without accomplishments and fame, leisure without rivers and seas, long life without Induction; to lose everything and yet possess everything, at ease in the illimitable, where all good things come to attend—this is the Way of Heaven and earth, the Virtue of the sage. So it is said, Limpidity, silence, emptiness, inaction—these are the level of Heaven and earth, the substance of the Way and its Virtue. So it is said, The sage rests; with rest comes peaceful ease, with peaceful ease comes limpidity, and where there is ease and limpidity, care and worry cannot get at him, noxious airs cannot assault him. Therefore his Virtue is complete and his spirit unimpaired.

So it is said, With the sage, his life is the working of Heaven, his death the transformation of things. In stillness, he and the yin share a single Virtue; in motion, he and the yang share a single flow. He is not the bearer of good fortune or the initiator of bad fortune. Roused by something outside himself, only then does he respond; pressed, only then does he move; finding he has no choice, only then does he rise up. He discards

knowledge and purpose and follows along with the reasonableness of Heaven. Therefore he incurs no disaster from Heaven, no entanglement from things, no opposition from man, no blame from the spirits. His life is a floating, his death a rest. He does not ponder or scheme, does not plot for the future. A man of light, he does not shine; of good faith, he keeps no promises. He sleeps without dreaming, wakes without worry. His spirit is pure and clean, his soul never wearied. In emptiness, nonbeing, and limpidity, he joins with the Virtue of Heaven.

So it is said, Grief and happiness are perversions of Virtue; joy and anger are transgressions of the Way; love and hate are offenses against Virtue. When the mind is without care or joy, this is the height of Virtue. When it is unified and unchanging, this is the height of stillness. When it grates against nothing, this is the height of emptiness. When it has no commerce with things, this is the height of limpidity. When it rebels against nothing, this is the height of purity.

So it is said, If the body is made to labor and take no rest, it will wear out; if the spiritual essence is taxed without cessation, it will grow weary, and weariness will bring exhaustion. It is the nature of water that if it is not mixed with other things, it will be clear, and if nothing stirs it, it will be level. But if it is dammed and hemmed in and not allowed to flow, then it, too, will cease to be clear. As such, it is a symbol of Heavenly Virtue. So it is said, To be pure, clean, and mixed with nothing; still, unified, and unchanging; limpid and inactive; moving with the workings of Heaven—this is the way to care for the spirit.

The man who owns a sword from Gan or Yue lays it in a box and stores it away, not daring to use it, for to him it is the greatest of treasures. Pure spirit reaches in the four directions, flows now this way, now that—there is no place it does not extend to. Above, it brushes Heaven; below, it coils on the earth. It transforms and nurses the ten thousand things, but no one can make out its form. Its name is called One-with-Heaven. The way to purity and whiteness is to guard the spirit, this alone; guard it and never lose it, and you will become one with spirit, one with its pure essence, which communicates and mingles with the Heavenly Order.[2] The common saying has it, "The ordinary man prizes gain, the man of integrity prizes name, the worthy man honors ambition, the sage values spiritual essence." Whiteness means there is nothing mixed in; purity means the spirit is never impaired. He who can embody purity and whiteness may be called the True Man.

1. In this last sentence, which describes the practitioner of Induction (*daoyin*), a kind of yoga technique involving exercises and breath control. I follow Waley's translations of technical terms such as "bear-hangings" and "bird-stretchings," whose meaning can only be guessed. See Waley's *Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China*, p. 44.

2. The word *jing* is being used in this passage in a number of different ways, a fact that is very difficult to bring out in translation. At the beginning of the paragraph, *jing*, translated as "spiritual essence," means the vital energy of the body; later the word appears as an adjective in the compound "pure spirit" (*jingshen*), that is, vital or essential spirit. Finally,

it appears as a noun, “essence,” or “purity.” Because it may also mean “semen,” the passage can be interpreted as dealing with the sexual regimen.

16

MENDING THE INBORN NATURE

Those who set about mending the inborn nature through vulgar learning, hoping thereby to return once more to the Beginning; those who set about muddling their desires through vulgar ways of thought, hoping thereby to attain clarity—they may be called the blind and benighted people.[1]

The men of ancient times who practiced the Way employed tranquillity to cultivate knowledge. Knowledge lived in them, yet they did nothing for its sake. So they may be said to have employed knowledge to cultivate tranquillity. Knowledge and tranquillity took turns cultivating each other, and harmony and order emerged from the inborn nature.

Virtue is harmony, the Way is order. When Virtue embraces all things, we have benevolence. When the Way is in all respects well ordered, we have righteousness. When righteousness is clearly understood and all things cling to it, we have loyalty. When within there is purity, fullness, and a return to true form, we have music. When good faith is expressed in face and body and there is a compliance with elegance, we have rites. But if all emphasis is placed on the conduct of rites and music, then the world will fall into disorder. The ruler, in his efforts to rectify, will draw a cloud over his own virtue, and his virtue will no longer extend to all things. And should he try to force it to extend, then things would invariably lose their in-born nature.[2]

The men of old dwelled in the midst of crudity and chaos; side by side with the rest of the world, they attained simplicity and silence there. At that time the yin and yang were harmonious and still; ghosts and spirits worked no mischief; the four seasons kept to their proper order; the ten thousand things knew no injury; and living creatures were free from premature death. Although men had knowledge, they did not use it. This was called the Perfect Unity. At this time, no one made a move to do anything, and there was unvarying spontaneity.

The time came, however, when Virtue began to dwindle and decline, and then Suiren and Fu Xi stepped forward to take charge of the world. As a result there was compliance, but no longer any unity. Virtue continued to dwindle and decline, and then Shennong and the Yellow Emperor stepped forward to take charge of the world. As a result, there was security but no longer any compliance. Virtue continued to dwindle and decline, and then Yao and Shun stepped forward to take charge of the world.[3] They set about in various fashions to order and transform the world and, in doing so, defiled purity and shattered simplicity. The Way was pulled apart for the sake of goodness; Virtue was imperiled for the

sake of conduct. After this, inborn nature was abandoned, and minds were set free to roam, mind joining with mind in understanding; there was knowledge, but it could not bring stability to the world. After this, "culture" was added, and "breadth" was piled on top. "Culture" destroyed the substantial; "breadth" drowned the mind; and after this, the people began to be confused and disordered. They had no way to revert to the true form of their inborn nature or to return once more to the Beginning.

From this we may see that the world has lost the Way and the Way has lost the world; the world and the Way have lost each other. What means does a man of the Way have to go forward in the world? What means does the world have to go forward in the Way? The Way cannot go forward in the world, and the world cannot go forward in the Way. So although the sage does not retire to dwell in the midst of the mountain forest, his Virtue is already hidden. It is already hidden, and therefore he does not need to hide it himself.

The so-called scholars in hiding of ancient times did not conceal their bodies and refuse to let them be seen; they did not shut in their words and refuse to let them out; they did not stow away their knowledge and refuse to share it. But the fate of the times was too much awry. If the fate of the times had been with them and they could have done great deeds in the world, then they would have returned to Unity and left no trace behind. But the fate of the times was against them and brought them only great hardship in the world, and therefore they deepened their roots, rested in perfection, and waited. This was the way they kept themselves alive.[4]

Those in ancient times who wished to keep themselves alive did not use eloquence to ornament their knowledge. They did not use their knowledge to make trouble for the world; they did not use their knowledge to make trouble for Virtue. Loftily they kept to their places and returned to their inborn nature. Having done that, what more was there for them to do? The Way has no use for petty conduct; Virtue has no use for petty understanding. Petty understanding injures Virtue; petty conduct injures the Way. Therefore it is said, Rectify yourself, that is all.[5] When joy is complete, this is called the fulfillment of ambition.

When the men of ancient times spoke of the fulfillment of ambition, they did not mean fine carriages and caps. They meant simply that joy was so complete that it could not be made greater. Nowadays, however, when men speak of the fulfillment of ambition, they mean fine carriages and caps. But carriages and caps affect the body alone, not the inborn nature and fate. Such things from time to time may happen to come your way. When they come, you cannot keep them from arriving, but when they depart, you cannot stop them from going. Therefore carriages and caps are no excuse for becoming puffed up with pride, and hardship and poverty are no excuse for fawning on the vulgar. You should find the same joy in one condition as in the other and thereby be free of care, that is all. But now, when the things that happened take their leave, you cease to be joyful. From this point of view, though you have joy, it will always be fated for destruction. Therefore it is said, Those who destroy themselves in things and lose their inborn nature in the vulgar may be called the upside-down people.

1. I punctuate after *xue* and *si*. The writer is attacking both the Confucian and Mohist ideals of moral training and those schools of thought that advocated the lessening or elimination of desire.

2. This passage, which attempts to derive the Confucian virtues and concerns from the Way, presents many difficulties in interpretation. Probably the text is faulty—judging from the parallelism; for example, "good faith" ought to have a definition of its own instead of being part of the definition of "rites." I follow Fukunaga's interpretation.

3. All these figures are mythical rulers or cultural heroes; Suiren and Shennong are the discoverers of fire and agriculture, respectively.

4. As Fukunaga pointed out, this concept of good and bad times that are fated is quite contrary to the philosophy expressed in the inner chapters, according to which any time is as good as any other. The thinking here is, in fact, much closer to the ideas of timeliness and fate expressed in the Confucian *Analects* or the *Book of Changes*.

5. Why the writer quotes such an un-Daoist injunction as "Rectify yourself," or what he means by it, I do not know.

17

AUTUMN FLOODS

The time of the autumn floods came, and the hundred streams poured into the Yellow River. Its racing current swelled to such proportions that, looking from bank to bank or island to island, it was impossible to distinguish a horse from a cow. Then the Lord of the River[1] was beside himself with joy, believing that all the beauty in the world belonged to him alone. Following the current, he journeyed east until at last he reached the North Sea. Looking east, he could see no end to the water.

The Lord of the River began to wag his head and roll his eyes. Peering far off in the direction of Ruo,[2] he sighed and said, "The common saying has it, 'He has heard the Way a mere hundred times, but he thinks he's better than anyone else.' It applies to me. In the past, I heard men belittling the learning of Confucius and making light of the righteousness of Bo Yi,[3] though I never believed them. Now, however, I have seen your unfathomable vastness. If I hadn't come to your gate,[4] I should have been in danger. I should forever have been laughed at by the masters of the Great Method!"

Ruo of the North Sea said, "You can't discuss the ocean with a well frog—he's limited by the space he lives in. You can't discuss ice with a summer insect—he's bound to a single season. You can't discuss the Way with a cramped scholar—he's shackled by his doctrines. Now you have come out beyond your banks and borders and have seen the great sea—so you realize your own pettiness. From now on, it will be possible to talk to you about the Great Principle.

"Of all the waters of the world, none is as great as the sea. Ten thousand streams flow into it—I have never heard of a time when they stopped—and yet it is never full. The water leaks away at Weilü[5]—I have never heard of a time when it didn't—and yet the sea is never empty. Spring or autumn, it never changes. Flood or drought, it takes no notice. It is so much greater than the streams of the Yangzi or the Yellow River that it is impossible to measure the difference. But I have never, for this reason, prided myself on it. I take my place with heaven and earth and receive breath from the yin and yang. I sit here between heaven and earth as a little stone or a little tree sits on a huge mountain. Since I can see my own smallness, what reason would I have to pride myself?

"Compare the area within the four seas with all that is between heaven and earth—is it not like one little anthill in a vast marsh? Compare the Middle Kingdom with the area within the four seas—is it not like one tiny grain in a great storehouse? When we refer to

the things of creation, we speak of them as numbering ten thousand—and man is only one of them. We talk of the Nine Provinces where men are most numerous, and yet of the whole area where grain and foods are grown and where boats and carts pass back and forth, man occupies only one fraction.[6] Compared to the ten thousand things, is he not like one little hair on the body of a horse? What the Five Emperors passed along, what the Three Kings fought over, what the benevolent man grieves about, what the responsible man labors over—all is no more than this![7] Bo Yi gained a reputation by giving it up; Confucius passed himself off as learned because he talked about it. But in priding themselves in this way, were they not like you a moment ago priding yourself on your floodwaters?"

"Well then," said the Lord of the River, "if I recognize the hugeness of heaven and earth and the smallness of the tip of a hair, will that do?"

"No indeed!" said Ruo of the North Sea. "There is no end to the weighing of things, no stop to time, no constancy to the division of lots, no fixed rule to beginning and end. Therefore great wisdom observes both far and near, and for that reason, it recognizes small without considering it paltry, recognizes large without considering it unwieldy, for it knows that there is no end to the weighing of things. It has a clear understanding of past and present, and for that reason, it spends a long time without finding it tedious, a short time without fretting at its shortness, for it knows that time has no end. It perceives the nature of fullness and emptiness, and for that reason, it does not delight if it acquires something or worry if it loses it, for it knows that there is no constancy to the division of lots. It comprehends the Level Road, and for that reason, it does not rejoice in life or look on death as a calamity, for it knows that no fixed rule can be assigned to beginning and end.

"Calculate what man knows, and it cannot compare with what he does not know. Calculate the time he is alive, and it cannot compare with the time before he was born. Yet man takes something so small and tries to exhaust the dimensions of something so large! Hence he is muddled and confused and can never get anywhere. Looking at it this way, how do we know that the tip of a hair can be singled out as the measure of the smallest thing possible? Or how do we know that heaven and earth can fully encompass the dimensions of the largest thing possible?"

The Lord of the River said, "Men who debate such matters these days all claim that the minutest thing has no form and the largest thing cannot be encompassed. Is this a true statement?"

Ruo of the North Sea said, "If from the standpoint of the minute, we look at what is large, we cannot see to the end. If from the standpoint of what is large, we look at what is minute, we cannot distinguish it clearly. The minute is the smallest of the small, the gigantic is the largest of the large, and it is therefore convenient to distinguish between them. But this is merely a matter of circumstance. Before we can speak of coarse or fine, however, there must be some form. If a thing has no form, then numbers cannot express its dimensions, and if it cannot be encompassed, then numbers cannot express its size. We can use words to talk about the coarseness of things, and we can use our minds to visualize the

fineness of things. But what words cannot describe and the mind cannot succeed in visualizing—this has nothing to do with coarseness or fineness.

"Therefore the Great Man in his actions will not harm others, but he makes no show of benevolence or charity. He will not move for the sake of profit, but he does not despise the porter at the gate. He will not wrangle for goods or wealth, but he makes no show of refusing or relinquishing them. He will not enlist the help of others in his work, but he makes no show of being self-supporting, and he does not despise the greedy and base. His actions differ from those of the mob, but he makes no show of uniqueness or eccentricity. He is content to stay behind with the crowd, but he does not despise those who run forward to flatter and fawn. All the titles and stipends of the age are not enough to stir him to exertion; all its penalties and censures are not enough to make him feel shame. He knows that no line can be drawn between right and wrong, no border can be fixed between great and small. I have heard it said, 'The Man of the Way wins no fame, the highest virtue[8] wins no gain, the Great Man has no self.' To the most perfect degree, he goes along with what has been allotted to him."

The Lord of the River said, "Whether they are external or internal to things, I do not understand how we come to have these distinctions of noble and mean or of great and small."

Ruo of the North Sea said, "From the point of view of the Way, things have no nobility or meanness. From the point of view of things themselves, each regards itself as noble and other things as mean. From the point of view of common opinion, nobility and meanness are not determined by the individual himself.

"From the point of view of differences, if we regard a thing as big because there is a certain bigness to it, then among all the ten thousand things there are none that are not big. If we regard a thing as small because there is a certain smallness to it, then among the ten thousand things there are none that are not small. If we know that heaven and earth are tiny grains and the tip of a hair is a range of mountains, then we have perceived the law of difference.

"From the point of view of function, if we regard a thing as useful because there is a certain usefulness to it, then among all the ten thousand things there are none that are not useful. If we regard a thing as useless because there is a certain uselessness to it, then among the ten thousand things there are none that are not useless. If we know that east and west are mutually opposed but that one cannot do without the other, then we can estimate the degree of function.

"From the point of view of preference, if we regard a thing as right because there is a certain right to it, then among the ten thousand things there are none that are not right. If we regard a thing as wrong because there is a certain wrong to it, then among the ten thousand things there are none that are not wrong. If we know that Yao and Jie each thought himself right and condemned the other as wrong, then we may understand how there are preferences in behavior.

"In ancient times Yao abdicated in favor of Shun, and Shun ruled as emperor; Kuai abdicated in favor of Zhi, and Zhi was destroyed.[9] Tang and Wu fought and became kings;

Duke Bo fought and was wiped out.[10] Looking at it this way, we see that struggling or giving way, behaving like a Yao or like a Jie, may at one time be noble and at another time be mean. It is impossible to establish any constant rule.

"A beam or pillar can be used to batter down a city wall, but it is no good for stopping up a little hole—this refers to a difference in function. Thoroughbreds like Qiji and Hualiu could gallop a thousand *li* in one day, but when it came to catching rats, they were no match for the wildcat or the weasel—this refers to a difference in skill. The horned owl catches fleas at night and can spot the tip of a hair, but when daylight comes, no matter how wide it opens its eyes, it cannot see a mound or a hill—this refers to a difference in nature. Now do you say that you are going to make Right your master and do away with Wrong, or make Order your master and do away with Disorder? If you do, then you have not understood the principle of heaven and earth or the nature of the ten thousand things. This is like saying that you are going to make Heaven your master and do away with Earth, or make Yin your master and do away with Yang. Obviously it is impossible. If men persist in talking this way without stop, they must be either fools or deceivers!

"Emperors and kings have different ways of ceding their thrones; the Three Dynasties had different rules of succession. Those who went against the times and flouted custom were called usurpers; those who went with the times and followed custom were called companions of righteousness. Be quiet, be quiet, O Lord of the River! How could you understand anything about the gateway of nobility and meanness or the house of great and small?"

"Well then," said the Lord of the River, "what should I do and what should I not do? How am I to know in the end what to accept and what to reject, what to abide by and what to discard?"

Ruo of the North Sea said, "From the point of view of the Way, what is noble or what is mean? These are merely what are called endless changes. Do not hobble your will, or you will be departing far from the Way! What is few, or what is many? These are merely what are called boundless turnings.[11] Do not strive to unify your actions, or you will be at sixes and sevens with the Way! Be stern like the ruler of a state—he grants no private favor. Be benign and impartial like the god of the soil at the sacrifice—he grants no private blessing. Be broad and expansive like the endlessness of the four directions—they have nothing that bounds or hedges them. Embrace the ten thousand things universally—how could there be one you should give special support to? This is called being without bent. When the ten thousand things are unified and equal, then which is short and which is long?

"The Way is without beginning or end, but things have their life and death—you cannot rely on their fulfillment. One moment empty, the next moment full—you cannot depend on their form. The years cannot be held off; time cannot be stopped. Decay, growth, fullness, and emptiness end and then begin again. It is thus that we must describe the plan of the Great Meaning and discuss the principles of the ten thousand things. The life of things is a gallop, a headlong dash—with every movement they alter, with every moment they shift. What should you do and what should you not do? Everything will change of itself, that is certain!"

“If that is so,” said the Lord of the River, “then what is there valuable about the Way?”

Ruo of the North Sea said, “He who understands the Way is certain to have command of basic principles. He who has command of basic principles is certain to know how to deal with circumstances. And he who knows how to deal with circumstances will not allow things to do him harm. When a man has perfect virtue, fire cannot burn him, water cannot drown him, cold and heat cannot afflict him, birds and beasts cannot injure him. I do not say that he makes light of these things. I mean that he distinguishes between safety and danger, contents himself with fortune or misfortune, and is cautious in his comings and goings. Therefore nothing can harm him.

“Hence it is said: the Heavenly is on the inside, the human is on the outside. Virtue resides in the Heavenly. Understand the actions of Heaven and man, base yourself on Heaven, take your stand in virtue,[12] and then, although you hasten or hold back, bend or stretch, you may return to the essential and speak of the ultimate.”

“What do you mean by the Heavenly and the human?”

Ruo of the North Sea said, “Horses and oxen have four feet—this is what I mean by the Heavenly. Putting a halter on the horse’s head, piercing the ox’s nose—this is what I mean by the human. So I say: do not let what is human wipe out what is Heavenly; do not let what is purposeful wipe out what is fated; do not let [the desire for] gain lead you after fame. Be cautious, guard it, and do not lose it—this is what I mean by returning to the True.”

The Kui[13] envies the millipede, the millipede envies the snake, the snake envies the wind, the wind envies the eye, and the eye envies the mind.

The Kui said to the millipede, “I have this one leg that I hop along on, though I make little progress. Now how in the world do you manage to work all those ten thousand legs of yours?”

The millipede said, “You don’t understand. Haven’t you ever watched a man spit? He just gives a hawk and out it comes, some drops as big as pearls, some as fine as mist, raining down in a jumble of countless particles. Now all I do is put in motion the heavenly mechanism in me—I’m not aware of how the thing works.”

The millipede said to the snake, “I have all these legs that I move along on, but I can’t seem to keep up with you who have no legs. How is that?”

The snake said, “It’s just the heavenly mechanism moving me along—how can I change the way I am? What would I do with legs if I had them?”

The snake said to the wind, “I move my backbone and ribs and manage to get along, though I still have some kind of body. But now you come whirling up from the North Sea and go whirling off to the South Sea, and you don’t seem to have any body. How is that?”

The wind said, “It’s true that I whirl up from the North Sea and whirl off to the South Sea. But if you hold up a finger against me you’ve defeated me, and if you trample on me you’ve likewise defeated me. On the other hand, I can break down big trees and blow over great houses—this is a talent that I alone have. So I take all the mass of little defeats and

make them into a Great Victory. To make a Great Victory—only the sage is capable of that!"

When Confucius was passing through Kuang, the men of Song surrounded him with several encirclements of troops, but he went right on playing his lute and singing without a stop.[14] Zi Lu went in to see him and said, "Master, how can you be so carefree?"

Confucius said, "Come, I will explain to you. For a long time I have tried to stay out of the way of hardship. That I have not managed to escape it is due to fate. For a long time I have tried to achieve success. That I have not been able to do so is due to the times. If it happens to be the age of a Yao or a Shun, then there are no men in the world who face hardship—but this is not because their wisdom saves them. If it happens to be the age of a Jie or a Zhou, then there are no men in the world who achieve success—but this is not because their wisdom fails them. It is time and circumstance that make it so.

"To travel across the water without shrinking from the sea serpent or the dragon—this is the courage of the fisherman. To travel over land without shrinking from the rhinoceros or the tiger—this is the courage of the hunter. To see the bare blades clashing before him and to look on death as though it were life—this is the courage of the man of ardor.[15] To understand that hardship is a matter of fate, that success is a matter of the times, and to face great difficulty without fear—this is the courage of the sage. Be content with it, Zi Lu. My fate has been decided for me."

Shortly afterward the leader of the armed men came forward and apologized. "We thought you were Yang Huo, and that was why we surrounded you. Now that we see you aren't, we beg to take leave and withdraw."

Gongsun Long said to Prince Mou of Wei,[16] "When I was young, I studied the Way of the former kings, and when I grew older, I came to understand the conduct of benevolence and righteousness. I reconciled difference and sameness, distinguished hardness and whiteness, and proved that not so was so, that the unacceptable was acceptable. I confounded the wisdom of the hundred schools and demolished the arguments of a host of speakers. I believed that I had attained the highest degree of accomplishment. But now I have heard the words of Zhuangzi, and I am bewildered by their strangeness. I don't know whether my arguments are not as good as his, or whether I am no match for him in understanding. I find now that I can't even open my beak. May I ask what you advise?"

Prince Mou leaned on his armrest and gave a great sigh, and then he looked up at the sky and laughed, saying, "Haven't you ever heard about the frog in the caved-in well? He said to the great turtle of the Eastern Sea, 'What fun I have! I come out and hop around the railing of the well, or I go back in and take a rest in the wall where a tile has fallen out. When I dive into the water, I let it hold me up under the armpits and support my chin, and when I slip about in the mud, I bury my feet in it and let it come up over my ankles. I look around at the mosquito larvae and the crabs and tadpoles, and I see that none of them can match me. To have complete command of the water of one whole valley and to monopolize

all the joys of a caved-in well—this is the best there is! Why don't you come some time and see for yourself?'

"But before the great turtle of the Eastern Sea had even gotten his left foot in the well, his right knee was already wedged fast. He backed out and withdrew a little, and then began to describe the sea. 'A distance of a thousand *li* cannot indicate its greatness; a depth of a thousand fathoms cannot express how deep it is. In the time of Yu, there were floods for nine years out of ten, and yet its waters never rose. In the time of Tang, there were droughts for seven years out of eight, and yet its shores never receded. Never to alter or shift, whether for an instant or an eternity; never to advance or recede, whether the quantity of water flowing in is great or small—this is the great delight of the Eastern Sea!'

"When the frog in the caved-in well heard this, he was dumbfounded with surprise, crestfallen, and completely at a loss. Now your knowledge cannot even define the borders of right and wrong, and still you try to see through the words of Zhuangzi—this is like trying to make a mosquito carry a mountain on its back or a pill bug race across the Yellow River. You will never be up to the task!

"He whose understanding cannot grasp these minute and subtle words but is fit only to win some temporary gain—is he not like the frog in the caved-in well? Zhuangzi, now—at this very moment he is treading the Yellow Springs[17] or leaping up to the vast blue. To him there is no north or south—in utter freedom he dissolves himself in the four directions and drowns himself in the unfathomable. To him there is no east or west—he begins in the Dark Obscurity and returns to the Great Thoroughfare. Now you come niggling along and try to spy him out or fix some name to him, but this is like using a tube to scan the sky or an awl to measure the depth of the earth—the instrument is too small, is it not? You'd better be on your way! Or perhaps you've never heard about the young boy of Shouling who went to learn the Handan Walk. He hadn't mastered what the Handan people had to teach him when he forgot his old way of walking, so he had to crawl all the way back home. Now if you don't get on your way, you're likely to forget what you knew before and be out of a job!"

Gongsun Long's mouth fell open and wouldn't stay closed. His tongue stuck to the roof of his mouth and wouldn't come down. In the end he broke into a run and fled.

Once, when Zhuangzi was fishing in the Pu River, the king of Chu sent two officials to go and announce to him: "I would like to trouble you with the administration of my realm."

Zhuangzi held on to the fishing pole and, without turning his head, said, "I have heard that there is a sacred tortoise in Chu that has been dead for three thousand years. The king keeps it wrapped in cloth and boxed, and stores it in the ancestral temple. Now would this tortoise rather be dead and have its bones left behind and honored? Or would it rather be alive and dragging its tail in the mud?"

"It would rather be alive and dragging its tail in the mud," said the two officials.

Zhuangzi said, "Go away! I'll drag my tail in the mud!"

When Huizi was prime minister of Liang, Zhuangzi set off to visit him. Someone said to Huizi, "Zhuangzi is coming because he wants to replace you as prime minister!" With this,

Huizi was filled with alarm and searched all over the state for three days and three nights trying to find Zhuangzi. Zhuangzi then came to see him and said, “In the south there is a bird called the Yuanchu—I wonder if you’ve ever heard of it? The Yuanchu rises up from the South Sea and flies to the North Sea, and it will rest on nothing but the Wutong tree, eat nothing but the fruit of the Lian, and drink only from springs of sweet water. Once there was an owl who had gotten hold of a half-rotten old rat, and as the Yuanchu passed by, it raised its head, looked up at the Yuanchu, and said, ‘Shoo!’ Now that you have this Liang state of yours, are you trying to shoo me?”

Zhuangzi and Huizi were strolling along the dam of the Hao River when Zhuangzi said, “See how the minnows come out and dart around where they please! That’s what fish really enjoy!”

Huizi said, “You’re not a fish—how do you know what fish enjoy?”

Zhuangzi said, “You’re not I, so how do you know that I don’t know what fish enjoy?”

Huizi said, “I’m not you, so I certainly don’t know what you know. On the other hand, you’re certainly not a fish—so that still proves that you don’t know what fish enjoy!”

Zhuangzi said, “Let’s go back to your original question, please. You asked me *how* I know what fish enjoy—so you already knew that I knew it when you asked the question. I know it by standing here beside the Hao.”

1. The Lord of the River, the god of the Yellow River, appeared on p. 45, under the name Pingyi.

2. The god of the sea.

3. Bo Yi, who relinquished his kingdom to his brother and later chose to die of starvation rather than serve a ruler he considered unjust, was regarded as a model of righteousness.

4. The Lord of the River has literally come to the gate of the sea. But a second meaning is implied, that is, “If I hadn’t become your disciple.”

5. Said by some commentators to be a huge fiery stone against which seawater turns to steam.

6. As it stands in the original, this sentence makes little sense to me, and the translation represents no more than a tentative attempt to extract some meaning.

7. The Five Emperors were five legendary rulers of high antiquity, of whom the Yellow Emperor, Yao, and Shun are the most famous. The Three Kings were the founders of the Three Dynasties, the Xia, the Shang, and the Zhou.

8. A play on the homophones *de* (virtue) and *de* (gain, or acquisition).

9. In 316 BCE, King Kuai of Yan was persuaded to imitate the example of Yao by ceding his throne to his minister Zi Zhi. In no time the state was torn by internal strife, and three years later it was invaded and annexed by the state of Qi.

10. Tang and Wu were the founders of the Shang and Zhou dynasties, respectively. Duke Bo was a scion of the royal family of Chu who led an unsuccessful revolt against its ruler and was defeated and forced to commit suicide in 479 BCE.

11. I follow Fukunaga's interpretation of these terms.

12. Actually, the text reads "gain" (*de*); perhaps this is merely a mistake for the *de* meaning "virtue," or perhaps a play on the two words is intended. See p. 129, n. 8.

13. A being with only one leg. Sometimes it is des cribed as a spirit or a strange beast, sometimes as a historical personage—the Music Master Kui.

14. The *Analects* twice states (IX, 5; XI, 22): "The Master was put in fear in Kuang." It is said that the people of the state in which Kuang was situated, here identified as Song, mistook Confucius for an enemy of theirs named Yang Huo.

15. A man who is willing to sacrifice his life to save others or to preserve his honor.

16. The logician Gongsun Long, who spent much time discussing the concepts of sameness and difference or the relationship of attributes such as hardness and whiteness to the thing they qualify, was mentioned on p. 10, n. 7, and p. 12, n. 9. Prince Mou of Wei was the reputed author of a Daoist work in four sections that is no longer extant.

17. The underworld.

18

SUPREME HAPPINESS

Is there such a thing as supreme happiness in the world, or isn't there? Is there some way to keep yourself alive, or isn't there? What to do, what to rely on, what to avoid, what to stick by, what to follow, what to leave alone, what to find happiness in, what to hate?

This is what the world honors: wealth, eminence, long life, a good name. This is what the world finds happiness in: a life of ease, rich food, fine clothes, beautiful sights, sweet sounds. This is what it looks down on: poverty, meanness, an early death, a bad name. This is what it finds bitter: a life that knows no rest, a mouth that gets no rich food, no fine clothes for the body, no beautiful sights for the eye, no sweet sounds for the ear.

People who can't get these things fret a great deal and are afraid—this is a stupid way to treat the body. People who are rich wear themselves out rushing around on business, piling up more wealth than they could ever use—this is a superficial way to treat the body. People who are eminent spend night and day scheming and wondering whether they are doing right—this is a shoddy way to treat the body. Man lives his life in company with worry, and if he lives a long while till he's dull and doddering, then he has spent that much time worrying instead of dying, a bitter lot indeed! This is a callous way to treat the body.

Men of ardor[1] are regarded by the world as good, but their goodness doesn't succeed in keeping them alive. So I don't know whether or not their goodness is really good. Perhaps I think it's good—but not good enough to save their lives. Perhaps I think it's no good—but still good enough to save the lives of others. So I say, if your loyal advice isn't heeded, give way and do not wrangle. Zixu wrangled and lost his body.[2] But if he hadn't wrangled, he wouldn't have made a name. Is there really such a thing as goodness, or isn't there?

What ordinary people do and what they find happiness in—I don't know whether or not such happiness is, in the end, really happiness. I look at what ordinary people find happiness in, what they all make a mad dash for, racing around as though they couldn't stop—they all say they're happy with it. I'm not happy with it, and I'm not unhappy with it. In the end, is there really happiness, or isn't there?

I take inaction to be true happiness, but ordinary people think it is a bitter thing. I say: the highest happiness has no happiness, the highest praise has no praise. The world can't decide what is right and what is wrong. And yet inaction can decide this. The highest happiness, keeping alive—only inaction gets you close to this!

Let me try putting it this way. The inaction of Heaven is its purity, the inaction of earth is its peace. So the two inactions combine, and all things are transformed and brought to

birth. Wonderfully, mysteriously, there is no place they come out of. Mysteriously, wonderfully, they have no sign. Each thing minds its business, and all grow up out of inaction. So I say, Heaven and earth do nothing, and there is nothing that is not done. Among men, who can get hold of this inaction?

Zhuangzi's wife died. When Huizi went to convey his condolences, he found Zhuangzi sitting with his legs sprawled out, pounding on a tub and singing. "You lived with her, she brought up your children and grew old," said Huizi. "It should be enough simply not to weep at her death. But pounding on a tub and singing—this is going too far, isn't it?"

Zhuangzi said, "You're wrong. When she first died, do you think I didn't grieve like anyone else? But I looked back to her beginning and the time before she was born. Not only the time before she was born, but the time before she had a body. Not only the time before she had a body, but the time before she had a spirit. In the midst of the jumble of wonder and mystery, a change took place and she had a spirit. Another change and she had a body. Another change and she was born. Now there's been another change and she's dead. It's just like the progression of the four seasons: spring, summer, fall, winter.

"Now she's going to lie down peacefully in a vast room. If I were to follow after her bawling and sobbing, it would show that I don't understand anything about fate. So I stopped."

Uncle Lack-Limb and Uncle Lame-Gait were seeing the sights at Dark Lord Hill and the wastes of Kunlun, the place where the Yellow Emperor rested.[3] Suddenly a willow sprouted out of Uncle Lame-Gait's left elbow.[4] He looked very startled and seemed to be annoyed.

"Do you resent it?" said Uncle Lack-Limb.

"No—what is there to resent?" said Uncle Lame-Gait. "To live is to borrow. And if we borrow to live, then life must be a pile of trash. Life and death are day and night. You and I came to watch the process of change, and now change has caught up with me. Why would I have anything to resent?"

When Zhuangzi went to Chu, he saw an old skull, all dry and parched. He poked it with his carriage whip and then asked, "Sir, were you greedy for life and forgetful of reason and so came to this? Was your state overthrown, and did you bow beneath the ax and so came to this? Did you do some evil deed, and were you ashamed to bring disgrace on your parents and family and so came to this? Was it through the pangs of cold and hunger that you came to this? Or did your springs and autumns pile up until they brought you to this?"

When he had finished speaking, he dragged the skull over and, using it for a pillow, lay down to sleep.

In the middle of the night, the skull came to him in a dream and said, "You chatter like a rhetorician, and all your words betray the entanglements of a living man. The dead know nothing of these! Would you like to hear a lecture on the dead?"

"Indeed," said Zhuangzi.

The skull said, “Among the dead, there are no rulers above, no subjects below, and no chores of the four seasons. With nothing to do, our springs and autumns are as endless as heaven and earth. A king facing south on his throne could have no more happiness than this!”

Zhuangzi couldn’t believe this and said, “If I got the Arbiter of Fate to give you a body again, make you some bones and flesh, return you to your parents and family and your old home and friends, you would want that, wouldn’t you?”

The skull frowned severely, wrinkling up its brow. “Why would I throw away more happiness than that of a king on a throne and take on the troubles of a human being again?” it said.

When Yan Yuan went east to Qi, Confucius had a very worried look on his face.[5] Zigong got off his mat and asked, “May I be so bold as to inquire why the Master has such a worried expression now that Hui has gone east to Qi?”

“Excellent—this question of yours,” said Confucius. “Guanzi[6] had a saying that I much approve of: ‘Small bags won’t hold big things; short well ropes won’t dip up deep water.’ In the same way I believe that fate has certain forms, and the body, certain appropriate uses. You can’t add to or take away from these. I’m afraid that when Hui gets to Qi, he will start telling the marquis of Qi about the ways of Yao, Shun, and the Yellow Emperor and then will go on to speak about Suiren and Shennong.[7] The marquis will then look for similar greatness within himself and fail to find it. Failing to find it, he will become distraught, and when a man becomes distraught, he kills.

“Haven’t you heard this story? Once a sea bird alighted in the suburbs of the Lu capital. The marquis of Lu escorted it to the ancestral temple, where he entertained it, performing the Nine Shao music for it to listen to and presenting it with the meat of the Tailao sacrifice to feast on. But the bird only looked dazed and forlorn, refusing to eat a single slice of meat or drink a cup of wine, and in three days it was dead. This is to try to nourish a bird with what would nourish you instead of what would nourish a bird. If you want to nourish a bird with what nourishes a bird, then you should let it roost in the deep forest, play among the banks and islands, float on the rivers and lakes, eat mudfish and minnows, follow the rest of the flock in flight and rest, and live in any way it chooses. A bird hates to hear even the sound of human voices, much less all that hubbub and to-do. Try performing the Xianchi and Nine Shao music in the wilds around Lake Dongting—when the birds hear it, they will fly off; when the animals hear it, they will run away; when the fish hear it, they will dive to the bottom. Only the people who hear it will gather around to listen. Fish live in water and thrive, but if men tried to live in water, they would die. Creatures differ because they have different likes and dislikes. Therefore the former sages never required the same ability from all creatures or made them all do the same thing. Names should stop when they have expressed reality, concepts of right should be founded on what is suitable. This is what it means to have command of reason and good fortune to support you.”

Liezi was on a trip and was eating by the roadside when he saw a hundred-year-old skull. Pulling away the weeds and pointing his finger, he said, “Only you and I know that you have never died and you have never lived. Are you really unhappy?[8] Am I really enjoying myself?”

The seeds of things have mysterious workings. In the water, they become Break Vine; on the edges of the water, they become Frog’s Robe. If they sprout on the slopes, they become Hill Slippers. If Hill Slippers get rich soil, they turn into Crow’s Feet. The roots of Crow’s Feet turn into maggots, and their leaves turn into butterflies. Before long, the butterflies are transformed and turn into insects that live under the stove; they look like snakes, and their name is Qutuo. After a thousand days, the Qutuo insects become birds called Dried Leftover Bones. The saliva of the Dried Leftover Bones becomes Simi bugs, and the Simi bugs become Vinegar Eaters. Yiluo bugs are born from the Vinegar Eaters, and Huangshuang bugs, from Jiuyou bugs. Jiuyou bugs are born from Mourui bugs, and Mourui bugs are born from Rot Grubs, and Rot Grubs are born from Sheep’s Groom. Sheep’s Groom couples with bamboo that has not sprouted for a long while and produces Green Peace plants. Green Peace plants produce leopards, and leopards produce horses, and horses produce men. Men in time return again to the mysterious workings. So all creatures come out of the mysterious workings and go back into them again.[9]

1. See p. 134, n. 15.

2. Wu Zixu, minister to the king of Wu, repeatedly warned the king of the danger of attack from the state of Yue. He finally aroused the king’s ire and suspicion and was forced to commit suicide in 484 BCE.

3. These all are places or persons associated in Chinese legend with immortality. The Yellow Emperor, as we have seen on pp. 45–46, did not die but ascended to Heaven.

4. According to the more prosaic interpretation of Li Ciming, the character for “willow” is a loan for the word “tumor.”

5. Yan Yuan or Yan Hui, who appeared earlier, was Confucius’s favorite disciple.

6. Guan Zhong, a seventh-century statesman of Qi whom Confucius, judging from the *Analects*, admired.

7. Suiren and Shennong are mythical culture heroes, the discoverers of fire and agriculture, respectively.

8. Following Yu Yue’s interpretation.

9. The text of this paragraph, a romp through ancient Chinese nature lore, is doubtful at many points.

19

MASTERING LIFE

He who has mastered the true nature of life does not labor over what life cannot do. He who has mastered the true nature of fate does not labor over what knowledge cannot change. He who wants to nourish his body must, first of all, turn to things. And yet it is possible to have more than enough things and for the body still to go un-nourished. He who has life must, first of all, see to it that it does not leave the body. And yet it is possible for life never to leave the body and still fail to be preserved. The coming of life cannot be fended off; its departure cannot be stopped. How pitiful the men of the world, who think that simply nourishing the body is enough to preserve life! Then why is what the world does worth doing? It may not be worth doing, and yet it cannot be left undone—this is unavoidable.

He who wants to avoid doing anything for his body had best abandon the world. By abandoning the world, he can be without entanglements. Being without entanglements, he can be upright and calm. Being upright and calm, he can be born again with others. Being born again, he can come close [to the Way].

But why is abandoning the affairs of the world worthwhile, and why is forgetting life worthwhile? If you abandon the affairs of the world, your body will be without toil. If you forget life, your vitality will be unimpaired. With your body complete and your vitality made whole again, you may become one with Heaven. Heaven and earth are the father and mother of the ten thousand things. They join to become a body; they part to become a beginning. When the body and vitality are without flaw, this is called being able to shift. Vitality added to vitality, you return to become the Helper of Heaven.

Master Liezi said to the Barrier Keeper Yin, “The Perfect Man can walk under water without choking, can tread on fire without being burned, and can travel above the ten thousand things without being frightened. May I ask how he manages this?”

The Barrier Keeper Yin replied, “This is because he guards the pure breath—it has nothing to do with wisdom, skill, determination, or courage. Sit down and I will tell you about it. All that have faces, forms, voices, colors—these are all mere things. How could one thing and another thing be far removed from each other? And how could any of them be worth considering as a predecessor? They are forms, colors—nothing more. But things have their creation in what has no form, and their conclusion in what has no change. If a man can get hold of *this* and exhaust it fully, then how can things stand in his way? He may rest within the bounds that know no excess, hide within the borders that know no source,

wander where the ten thousand things have their end and beginning, unify his nature, nourish his breath, unite his virtue, and thereby communicate with that which creates all things. A man like this guards what belongs to Heaven and keeps it whole. His spirit has no flaw, so how can things enter in and get at him?

"When a drunken man falls from a carriage, though the carriage may be going very fast, he won't be killed. He has bones and joints the same as other men, and yet he is not injured as they would be, because his spirit is whole. He didn't know he was riding, and he doesn't know he has fallen out. Life and death, alarm and terror, do not enter his breast, and so he can bang against things without fear of injury. If he can keep himself whole like this by means of wine, how much more can he keep himself whole by means of Heaven! The sage hides himself in Heaven—hence there is nothing that can do him harm.

"A man seeking revenge does not go so far as to smash the sword of his enemy; a man, no matter how hot tempered, does not rail at the tile that happens to fall on him. To know that all things in the world are equal and the same—this is the only way to eliminate the chaos of attack and battle and the harshness of punishment and execution!

"Do not try to develop what is natural to man; develop what is natural to Heaven. He who develops Heaven benefits life; he who develops man injures life. Do not reject what is of Heaven, do not neglect what is of man, and the people will be close to the attainment of Truth."[1]

When Confucius was on his way to Chu, he passed through a forest where he saw a hunchback catching cicadas with a sticky pole as easily as though he were grabbing them with his hand.

Confucius said, "What skill you have! Is there a special way to this?"

"I have a way," said the hunchback. "For the first five or six months, I practice balancing two balls on top of each other on the end of the pole, and if they don't fall off, I know I will lose very few cicadas. Then I balance three balls, and if they don't fall off, I know I'll lose only one cicada in ten. Then I balance five balls, and if they don't fall off, I know it will be as easy as grabbing them with my hand. I hold my body like a stiff tree trunk and use my arm like an old dry limb. No matter how huge heaven and earth or how numerous the ten thousand things, I'm aware of nothing but cicada wings. Not wavering, not tipping, not letting any of the other ten thousand things take the place of those cicada wings—how can I help but succeed?"

Confucius turned to his disciples and said, "He keeps his will undivided and concentrates his spirit—that would serve to describe our hunchback gentleman here, would it not?"

* * *

Yan Yuan said to Confucius, "I once crossed the gulf at Goblet Deeps, and the ferryman handled the boat with supernatural skill. I asked him, 'Can a person learn how to handle a boat?' and he replied, 'Certainly. A good swimmer will get the knack of it in no time. And if a man can swim under water, he may never have seen a boat before, and still he'll know

how to handle it!' I asked him what he meant by that, but he wouldn't tell me. May I venture to ask you what it means?"

Confucius said, "A good swimmer will get the knack of it in no time—that means he's forgotten the water. If a man can swim under water, he may never have seen a boat before, and still he'll know how to handle it—that's because he sees the water as so much dry land and regards the capsizing of a boat as he would the overturning of a cart. The ten thousand things[2] all may be capsizing and turning over at the same time right in front of him, and it can't get at him and affect what's inside—so where could he go and not be at ease?

"When you're betting for tiles in an archery contest, you shoot with skill. When you're betting for fancy belt buckles, you worry about your aim. And when you're betting for real gold, you're a nervous wreck. Your skill is the same in all three cases—but because one prize means more to you than another, you let outside considerations weigh on your mind. He who looks too hard at the outside gets clumsy on the inside."

Tian Kaizhi went to see Duke Wei of Zhou. Duke Wei said, "I hear that Zhu Xian is studying how to live. You are a friend of his—what have you heard from him on the subject?"

Tian Kaizhi said, "I merely wield a broom and tend his gate and garden—how should I have heard anything from the Master?"

Duke Wei said, "Don't be modest, Master Tian. I am anxious to hear about it."

Tian Kaizhi said, "I have heard the Master say, 'He who is good at nourishing life is like a herder of sheep—he watches for stragglers and whips them up.'"

"What does that mean?" asked Duke Wei.

Tian Kaizhi said, "In Lu there was Shan Bao—he lived among the cliffs, drank only water, and didn't go after gain like other people. He went along like that for seventy years and still had the complexion of a little child. Unfortunately, he met a hungry tiger who killed him and ate him up. Then there was Zhang Yi—there wasn't one of the great families and fancy mansions that he didn't rush off to visit. He went along like that for forty years, and then he developed an internal fever, fell ill, and died. Shan Bao looked after what was on the inside and the tiger ate up his outside. Zhang Yi looked after what was on the outside and the sickness attacked him from the inside. Both these men failed to give a lash to the stragglers.[3]

"Confucius has said, 'Don't go in and hide; don't come out and shine; stand stock-still in the middle.' He who can follow these three rules is sure to be called the finest. When people are worried about the safety of the roads, if they hear that one traveler in a party of ten has been murdered, then fathers and sons, elder and younger brothers, will warn one another to be careful and will not venture out until they have a large escort of armed men. That's wise of them, isn't it? But when it comes to what people really ought to be worried about—the time when they are lying in bed or sitting around eating and drinking—then they don't have sense enough to take warning. That's a mistake!"

The Invocator of the Ancestors, dressed in his black, square-cut robes, peered into the pigpen and said, "Why should you object to dying? I'm going to fatten you for three

months, practice austerities for ten days, fast for three days, spread the white rushes, and lay your shoulders and rump on the carved sacrificial stand—you'll go along with that, won't you? True, if I were planning things from the point of view of a pig, I'd say it would be better to eat chaff and bran and stay right there in the pen. But if I were planning for myself, I'd say that if I could be honored as a high official while I lived and get to ride in a fine hearse and lie among the feathers and trappings when I died, I'd go along with that. Speaking for the pig, I'd give such a life a flat refusal, but speaking for myself, I'd certainly accept. I wonder why I look at things differently from a pig?"

Duke Huan was hunting in a marsh, with Guan Zhong as his carriage driver, when he saw a ghost. The duke grasped Guan Zhong's hand and said, "Father Zhong, what do you see?"[4]

"I don't see anything," replied Guan Zhong.

When the duke returned home, he fell into a stupor, grew ill, and for several days did not go out.

A gentleman of Qi named Huangzi Gaoao said, "Your Grace, you are doing this injury to yourself! How could a ghost have the power to injure you! If the vital breath that is stored up in a man becomes dispersed and does not return, then he suffers a deficiency. If it ascends and fails to descend again, it causes him to be chronically irritable. If it descends and does not ascend again, it causes him to be chronically forgetful. And if it neither ascends nor descends but gathers in the middle of the body in the region of the heart, then he becomes ill."

Duke Huan said, "But do ghosts really exist?"

"Indeed they do. There is the Li on the hearth[5] and the Ji in the stove. The heap of clutter and trash just inside the gate is where the Leiting lives. In the northeast corner the Beia and Guilong leap about, and the northwest corner is where the Yiyang lives. In the water is the Gangxiang; on the hills, the Xin; in the mountains, the Kui;[6] in the meadows, the Panghuang; and in the marshes, the Weituo."

The duke said, "May I ask what a Weituo looks like?"

Huangzi said, "The Weituo is as big as a wheel hub, as tall as a carriage shaft, has a purple robe and a vermilion hat, and, as creatures go, is very ugly. When it hears the sound of thunder or a carriage, it grabs its head and stands up. Anyone who sees it will soon become a dictator."

Duke Huan's face lit up, and he said with a laugh, "*That* must have been what I saw!" Then he straightened his robe and hat and sat up on the mat with Huangzi, and before the day was over, though he didn't notice it, his illness went away.

Ji Xingzi was training gamecocks for the king. After ten days, the king asked if they were ready.

"Not yet. They're too haughty and rely on their nerve."

Another ten days and the king asked again.

"Not yet. They still respond to noises and movements."

Another ten days and the king asked again.

"Not yet. They still look around fiercely and are full of spirit."

Another ten days and the king asked again.

"They're close enough. Another cock can crow, and they show no sign of change. Look at them from a distance, and you'd think they were made of wood. Their virtue is complete. Other cocks won't dare face up to them but will turn and run."

Confucius was seeing the sights at Lüliang, where the water falls from a height of thirty fathoms and races and boils along for forty *li*, so swift that no fish or other water creature can swim in it. He saw a man dive into the water, and supposing that the man was in some kind of trouble and intended to end his life, he ordered his disciples to line up on the bank and pull the man out. But after the man had gone a couple of hundred paces, he came out of the water and began strolling along the base of the embankment, his hair streaming down, singing a song. Confucius ran after him and said, "At first I thought you were a ghost, but now I see you're a man. May I ask if you have some special way of staying afloat in the water?"

"I have no way. I began with what I was used to, grew up with my nature, and let things come to completion with fate. I go under with the swirls and come out with the eddies, following along the way the water goes and never thinking about myself. That's how I can stay afloat."

Confucius said, "What do you mean by saying that you began with what you were used to, grew up with your nature, and let things come to completion with fate?"

"I was born on the dry land and felt safe on the dry land—that was what I was used to. I grew up with the water and felt safe in the water—that was my nature. I don't know why I do what I do—that's fate."

Woodworker Qing[7] carved a piece of wood and made a bell stand, and when it was finished, everyone who saw it marveled, for it seemed to be the work of gods or spirits. When the marquis of Lu saw it, he asked, "What art is it you have?"

Qing replied, "I am only a craftsman—how would I have any art? There is one thing, however. When I am going to make a bell stand, I never let it wear out my energy. I always fast in order to still my mind. When I have fasted for three days, I no longer have any thought of congratulations or rewards, of titles or stipends. When I have fasted for five days, I no longer have any thought of praise or blame, of skill or clumsiness. And when I have fasted for seven days, I am so still that I forget I have four limbs and a form and body. By that time, the ruler and his court no longer exist for me. My skill is concentrated, and all outside distractions fade away. After that, I go into the mountain forest and examine the Heavenly nature of the trees. If I find one of superlative form and I can see a bell stand there, I put my hand to the job of carving; if not, I let it go. This way I am simply matching up 'Heaven' with 'Heaven.'[8] That's probably the reason that people wonder if the results were not made by spirits."

Dongye Ji was displaying his carriage driving before Duke Zhuang. He drove back and forth as straight as a measuring line and wheeled to left and right as neat as a compass-

drawn curve. Duke Zhuang concluded that even Zao Fu[9] could do no better and ordered him to make a hundred circuits and then return to the palace. Yan He happened along at the moment and went in to see the duke. “Dongye Ji’s horses are going to break down,” he said. The duke was silent and gave no answer. In a little while Dongye Ji returned, his horses having in fact broken down. The duke asked Yan He, “How did you know that was going to happen?” Yan He said, “The strength of the horses was all gone, and still he was asking them to go on—that’s why I said they would break down.”

Artisan Chui could draw as true as a compass or a T square because his fingers changed along with things and he didn’t let his mind get in the way. Therefore his Spirit Tower[10] remained unified and unobstructed.

You forget your feet when the shoes are comfortable. You forget your waist when the belt is comfortable. Understanding forgets right and wrong when the mind is comfortable. There is no change in what is inside, no following what is outside, when the adjustment to events is comfortable. You begin with what is comfortable and never experience what is uncomfortable when you know the comfort of forgetting what is comfortable.

A certain Sun Xiu appeared at the gate of Master Bian Qingzi to pay him a call. “When I was living in the village,” he said, “no one ever said I lacked good conduct. When I faced difficulty, no one ever said I lacked courage. Yet when I worked the fields, it never seemed to be a good year for crops, and when I served the ruler, it never seemed to be a good time for advancement. So I am an outcast from the villages, an exile from the towns. What crime have I committed against Heaven? Why should I meet this fate?”

Master Bian said, “Have you never heard how the Perfect Man conducts himself? He forgets his liver and gall and thinks no more about his eyes and ears. Vague and aimless, he wanders beyond the dirt and dust; free and easy, tending to nothing is his job. This is what is called ‘doing but not looking for any thanks, bringing up but not bossing.’[11] Now you show off your wisdom in order to astound the ignorant, work at your good conduct in order to distinguish yourself from the disreputable, going around bright and shining as though you were carrying the sun and moon in your hand! You’ve managed to keep your body in one piece; you have all the ordinary nine openings; you haven’t been struck down midway by blindness or deafness, lameness or deformity—compared with a lot of people, you’re a lucky man. How do you have any time to go around complaining against Heaven? Be on your way!”

After Master Sun had left, Master Bian went back into the house, sat down for a while, and then looked up to heaven and sighed. One of his disciples asked, “Why does my teacher sigh?”

Master Bian said, “Just now Sun Xiu came to see me, and I described to him the virtue of the Perfect Man. I’m afraid he was very startled and may end up in a complete muddle.”

“Surely not,” said the disciple. “Was what Master Sun said right and what my teacher said wrong? If so, then wrong can certainly never make a muddle out of right. Or was what

Master Sun said wrong and what my teacher said right? If so, then he must already have been in a muddle when he came here, so what's the harm?"

"You don't understand," said Master Bian. "Once long ago a bird alighted in the suburbs of the Lu capital. The ruler of Lu was delighted with it, had a Tailao sacrifice prepared for it to feast on, and the Nine Shao music performed for its enjoyment. But the bird immediately began to look unhappy and dazed and did not dare to eat or drink. This is what is called trying to nourish a bird with what would nourish you. If you want to nourish a bird with what will nourish a bird, you had best let it roost in the deep forest, float on the rivers and lakes, and live on snakes—then it can feel at ease.[12]

"Now Sun Xiu is a man of ignorance and little learning. For me to describe to him the virtue of the Perfect Man is like taking a mouse for a ride in a carriage or trying to delight a quail with the music of bells and drums. How could he help but be startled?"

1. I follow the text as it stands, though it would perhaps be preferable to adopt Ma Xulun's suggestion, dropping the *min* and translating "and you will be close to the attainment of Truth."

2. Following the interpretation of Yu Yue, who supplies a *wu* after the *wan*.

3. That is, stick to a happy medium.

4. Duke Huan of Qi (r. 685–643 BCE) later became the first of the *ba*—dictators or hegemons who imposed their will on the other feudal lords. Guan Zhong (d. 645 BCE) was his chief minister. As a special mark of esteem, the duke customarily addressed him as "Father Zhong."

5. Following Yu Yue's emendation and interpretation.

6. The one-legged creature who appeared on p. 133.

7. A carpenter of Lu, mentioned in the *Zuozhuan* under Duke Xiang, fourth year (569 BCE).

8. That is, matching his own innate nature with that of the tree.

9. Zao Fu was a famous master of the art of carriage driving. I emend *wen* to *fu*.

10. A Daoist term for the mind.

11. The same saying is found in the *Daodejing*, secs. X and LI.

12. The text of the last part of the sentence appears to be corrupt, and I make little sense of it. The same anecdote, in somewhat more detailed form, appeared on p. 143.

20

THE MOUNTAIN TREE

Zhuangzi was walking in the mountains when he saw a huge tree, its branches and leaves thick and lush. A wood-cutter paused by its side but made no move to cut it down. When Zhuangzi asked the reason, he replied, “There’s nothing it could be used for!” Zhuangzi said, “Because of its worthlessness, this tree is able to live out the years Heaven gave it.”

Down from the mountain, the Master stopped for a night at the house of an old friend. The friend, delighted, ordered his son to kill a goose and prepare it. “One of the geese can cackle and the other can’t,” said the son. “May I ask, please, which I should kill?”

“Kill the one that can’t cackle,” said the host.

The next day Zhuangzi’s disciples questioned him. “Yesterday there was a tree on the mountain that gets to live out the years Heaven gave it because of its worthlessness. Now there’s our host’s goose that gets killed because of its worthlessness. What position would you take in such a case, Master?”

Zhuangzi laughed and said, “I’d probably take a position halfway between worth and worthlessness. But halfway between worth and worthlessness, though it might seem to be a good place, really isn’t—you’ll never get away from trouble there. It would be very different, though, if you were to climb up on the Way and its Virtue and go drifting and wandering, neither praised nor damned, now a dragon, now a snake, shifting with the times, never willing to hold to one course only. Now up, now down, taking harmony for your measure, drifting and wandering with the ancestor of the ten thousand things, treating things as things but not letting them treat you as a thing—then how could you get into any trouble? This is the rule, the method of Shennong and the Yellow Emperor.

“But now, what with the forms of the ten thousand things and the codes of ethics handed down from man to man, matters don’t proceed in this fashion. Things join only to part, reach completion only to crumble. If sharp edged, they are blunted; if high stationed, they are overthrown;[1] if ambitious, they are foiled. Wise, they are schemed against; stupid, they are swindled. What is there, then, that can be counted on? Only one thing, alas!—remember this, my students—only the realm of the Way and its Virtue!”

Yiliao from south of the Market called on the marquis of Lu.[2] The marquis had a very worried look on his face. “Why such a worried look?” asked the Master from south of the Market.

The marquis of Lu said, “I study the way of the former kings; I do my best to carry on the achievements of the former rulers; I respect the spirits, honor worthy men, draw close to them, follow their advice, and never for an instant leave their side. And yet I can’t seem to avoid disaster. That’s why I’m so worried.”

The Master from south of the Market said, “Your technique for avoiding disaster is a very superficial one. The sleek-furred fox and the elegantly spotted leopard dwell in the mountain forest and crouch in the cliffside caves—such is their quietude. They go abroad by night but lurk at home by day—such is their caution. Though hunger, thirst, and hardship press them, they steal forth only one by one to seek food by the rivers and lakes—such is their forethought.[3] And yet they can’t seem to escape the disaster of nets and traps. Where is the blame? Their fur is their undoing. And this state of Lu—is it not your coat of fur? So I would ask you to strip away your form, rid yourself of this fur, wash clean your mind, be done with desire, and wander in the peopleless fields.

“In Nanyue there is a city, and its name is The Land of Virtue Established. Its people are foolish and naive, few in thoughts of self, scant in desires. They know how to make but not how to lay away; they give but look for nothing in return. They do not know what accords with right; they do not know what conforms to ritual. Uncouth, uncaring, they move recklessly—and in this way they tread the path of the Great Method. Their birth brings rejoicing, their death a fine funeral. So I would ask you to discard your state, break away from its customs, and, with the Way as your helper, journey there.”

The ruler of Lu said, “The road there is long and perilous. Moreover, there are rivers and mountains between, and I have no boat or carriage. What can I do?”

The Master from south of the Market said, “Be without imperiousness, be without conventionality—let this be your carriage.”[4]

But the ruler of Lu said, “The road is dark and long, and there are no people there. Who will be my companion on the way? When I have no rations, when I have nothing to eat, how will I be able to reach my destination?”

The Master from south of the Market said, “Make few your needs, lessen your desires, and then you may get along even without rations. You will ford the rivers and drift out on the sea. Gaze all you may—you cannot see its farther shore; journey on and on—you will never find where it ends. Those who came to see you off will all turn back from the shore and go home while you move ever farther into the distance.

“He who possesses men will know hardship; he who is possessed by men will know care. Therefore Yao neither possessed men nor allowed himself to be possessed by them. So I ask you to rid yourself of hardship, to cast off your cares, and to wander alone with the Way to the Land of Great Silence.

“If a man, having lashed two hulls together, is crossing a river, and an empty boat happens along and bumps into him, no matter how hot tempered the man may be, he will not get angry. But if there should be someone in the other boat, then he will shout out to haul this way or veer that. If his first shout is not heeded, he will shout again, and if that is not heard, he will shout a third time, this time with a torrent of curses following. In the first instance, he wasn’t angry; now in the second, he is. Earlier he faced emptiness, now he

faces occupancy. If a man could succeed in making himself empty and, in that way, wander through the world, then who could do him harm?"

Beigong She was collecting taxes for Duke Ling of Wei in order to make a set of bells. He built a platform outside the gate of the outer wall, and in the space of three months the bells were completed, both the upper and lower tiers.[5] Prince Qingji, observing this, asked, "What art is it you wield?"[6]

Beigong She replied, "In the midst of Unity, how should I venture to 'wield' anything? I have heard it said, When carving and polishing are done, then return to plainness. Dull, I am without understanding; placid, I dawdle and drift. Mysteriously, wonderfully, I bid farewell to what goes, I greet what comes; for what comes cannot be denied, and what goes cannot be detained. I follow the rude and violent, trail after the meek and bending, letting each come to its own end. So I can collect taxes from morning to night and meet not the slightest rebuff. How much more would this be true, then, of a man who had hold of the Great Road?"

Confucius was besieged between Chen and Cai, and for seven days he ate no cooked food. Taigong Ren went to offer his sympathy. "It looks as if you're going to die," he said.

"It does indeed."

"Do you hate the thought of dying?"

"I certainly do!"

Ren said, "Then let me try telling you about a way to keep from dying. In the eastern sea, there is a bird and its name is Listless. It flutters and flounces but seems to be quite helpless. It must be boosted and pulled before it can get into the air, pushed and shoved before it can get back to its nest. It never dares to be the first to advance, never dares to be the last to retreat. At feeding time, it never ventures to take the first bite but picks only at the leftovers. So when it flies in file, it never gets pushed aside, nor do other creatures such as men ever do it any harm. In this way, it escapes disaster.

"The straight-trunked tree is the first to be felled; the well of sweet water is the first to run dry. And you, now—you show off your wisdom in order to astound the ignorant, work at your good conduct in order to distinguish yourself from the disreputable, going around bright and shining as though you were carrying the sun and moon in your hand! That's why you can't escape!

"I have heard the Man of Great Completion say: 'Boasts are a sign of no success; success once won faces overthrow; fame once won faces ruin.' Who can rid himself of success and fame, return and join the common run of men? His Way flows abroad, but he does not rest in brightness; his Virtue[7] moves, but he does not dwell in fame. Vacant, addled, he seems close to madness. Wiping out his footprints, sloughing off his power, he does not work for success or fame. So he has no cause to blame other men, nor other men to blame him. The Perfect Man wants no repute. Why then do you delight in it so?"

"Excellent!" exclaimed Confucius. Then he said goodbye to his friends and associates, dismissed his disciples, and retired to the great swamp, wearing furs and coarse cloth and

living on acorns and chestnuts. He could walk among the animals without alarming their herds, walk among the birds without alarming their flocks. If even the birds and beasts did not resent him, how much less would men!

* * *

Confucius said to Master Sanghu, “Twice I have been driven out of Lu. The people chopped down a tree on me in Song, wiped away my footprints in Wei, made trouble for me in Shang and Zhou, and besieged me between Chen and Cai—so many calamities have I encountered. My kinfolk and associates drift further and further away; my friends and followers one after the other take leave. Why is this?”

Master Sanghu said, “Have you never heard about Lin Hui, the man who fled from Jia? He threw away his jade disk worth a thousand measures of gold, strapped his little baby on his back, and hurried off. Someone said to him, ‘Did you think of it in terms of money? Surely a little baby isn’t worth much money! Or were you thinking of the bother? But a little baby is a great deal of bother! Why, then, throw away a jade disk worth a thousand measures of gold and hurry off with a little baby on your back?’

“Lin Hui replied, ‘The jade disk and I were joined by profit, but the child and I were brought together by Heaven. When pressed by misfortune and danger, things joined by profit will cast one another aside; but when pressed by misfortune and danger, things brought together by Heaven will cling to one another. To cling to one another and to cast one another aside are far apart indeed!’

“The friendship of a gentleman, they say, is insipid as water; that of a petty man, sweet as rich wine. But the insipidity of the gentleman leads to affection, while the sweetness of the petty man leads to revulsion. Those with no particular reason for joining together will, for no particular reason, part.”

Confucius said, “I will do my best to honor your instructions!” Then with leisurely steps and a free and easy manner, he returned home. He abandoned his studies, gave away his books, and his disciples no longer came to bow in obeisance before him, but their affection for him was greater than it had ever been before.

Another day Master Sanghu likewise said, “When Shun was about to die, he carefully[8] instructed Yu in these words: ‘Mark what I say! In the case of the body, it is best to let it go along with things. In the case of the emotions, it is best to let them follow where they will. By going along with things, you avoid becoming separated from them. By letting the emotions follow as they will, you avoid fatigue. And when there is no separation or fatigue, then you need not seek any outward adornment or depend on the body. And when you no longer seek outward adornment or depend on the body, you have in fact ceased to depend on any material thing.’”

Zhuangzi put on his robe of coarse cloth with the patches on it, tied his shoes with hemp to keep them from falling apart, and went to call on the king of Wei. “My goodness, sir, you certainly are in distress!” said the king of Wei.

Zhuangzi said, “I am poor, but I am not in distress! When a man possesses the Way and its Virtue but cannot put them into practice, then he is in distress. When his clothes are

shabby and his shoes worn through, then he is poor, but he is not in distress. This is what they call being born at the wrong time. Has Your Majesty never observed the bounding monkeys? If they can reach the tall cedars, the catalpas, or the camphor trees, they will swing and sway from their limbs, frolic and lord it in their midst, and even the famous archers Yi or Peng Meng could not take accurate aim at them. But when they find themselves among prickly mulberries, brambles, hawthorns, or spiny citrons, they must move with caution, glancing from side to side, quivering and quaking with fear. It is not that their bones and sinews have suddenly become stiff and lost their suppleness. It is simply that the monkeys find themselves in a difficult and disadvantageous position in which they cannot exercise their abilities to the full. And now if I should live under a benighted ruler and among traitorous ministers and still hope to escape distress, what hope would there be of doing so? Bi Gan had his heart cut out—there is the proof of the matter!"[9]

Confucius was in trouble between Chen and Cai, and for seven days he ate no cooked food. His left hand propped against a withered tree, his right beating time on a withered limb, he sang the air of the lord of Yan.[10] The rapping of the limb provided an accompaniment, but it was without any fixed rhythm; there was melody, but none that fitted the usual tonal categories of *gong* or *jue*. The drumming on the tree and the voice of the singer had a pathos to them that would strike a man's heart.

Yan Hui, standing with hands folded respectfully across his chest, turned his eyes and looked inquiringly at Confucius. Confucius, fearful that Yan Hui's respect for him was too great, that his love for him was too tender, said to him, "Hui! It is easy to be indifferent to the afflictions of Heaven but hard to be indifferent to the benefits of man. No beginning but has its end, and man and Heaven are one. Who is it, then, who sings this song now?"

Hui said, "May I venture to ask what you mean when you say it is easy to be indifferent to the afflictions of Heaven?"

Confucius said, "Hunger, thirst, cold, heat, barriers and blind alleys that will not let you pass—these are the workings of Heaven and earth, the shifts of ever turning things. This is what is called traveling side by side with the others. He who serves as a minister does not dare to abandon his lord. And if he is thus faithful to the way of a true minister, how much more would he be if he were to attend on Heaven!"

"And what do you mean when you say that it is hard to be indifferent to the benefits of man?"

Confucius replied, "A man sets out on a career, and soon he is advancing in all four directions at once. Titles and stipends come raining down on him without end, but these are merely material profits and have nothing to do with the man himself. As for me, my fate lies elsewhere. A gentleman will not pilfer, a worthy man will not steal. What business would I have, then, trying to acquire such things? So it is said, There is no bird wiser than the swallow. If its eyes do not light on a suitable spot, it will not give a second look. If it happens to drop the food it had in its beak, it will let it go and fly on its way. It is wary of

men, and yet it lives among them, finding its protection along with men in the village altars of the soil and grain."

"And what do you mean by saying, 'No beginning but has its end'?"

Confucius said, "There is a being who transforms the ten thousand things, yet we do not know how he works these changes. How do we know what is an end? How do we know what is a beginning? The only thing for us to do is just to wait!"

"And what do you mean by saying, 'man and Heaven are one'?"

Confucius said, "Man exists because of Heaven, and Heaven, too, exists because of Heaven. But man cannot cause Heaven to exist; this is because of [the limitations of] his inborn nature. The sage, calm and placid, embodies change and so comes to his end."

Zhuang Zhou was wandering in the park at Diaoling when he saw a peculiar kind of magpie that came flying along from the south. It had a wingspread of seven feet, and its eyes were a good inch in diameter. It brushed against Zhuang Zhou's forehead and then settled down in a grove of chestnut trees. "What kind of bird is that!" exclaimed Zhuang Zhou. "Its wings are enormous, but they get it nowhere; its eyes are huge, but it can't even see where it's going!" Then he hitched up his robe, strode forward, cocked his crossbow, and prepared to take aim. As he did so, he spied a cicada that had found a lovely spot of shade and had forgotten all about [the possibility of danger to] its body. Behind it, a praying mantis, stretching forth its claws, prepared to snatch the cicada, and it, too, had forgotten about its own form as it eyed its prize. The peculiar magpie was close behind, ready to make off with the praying mantis, forgetting its own true self as it fixed its eyes on the prospect of gain. Zhuang Zhou, shuddering at the sight, said, "Ah!—things do nothing but make trouble for one another—one creature calling down disaster on another!" He threw down his crossbow, turned about, and hurried from the park, but the park keeper [taking him for a poacher] raced after him with shouts of accusation.

Zhuang Zhou returned home and, for three months, looked unhappy.[11] Lin Ju in the course of tending to his master's needs, questioned him, saying, "Master, why is it that you are so unhappy these days?"

Zhuang Zhou said, "In clinging to outward form, I have forgotten my own body. Staring at muddy water, I have been misled into taking it for a clear pool. Moreover, I have heard my Master say, 'When you go among the vulgar, follow their rules!' I went wandering at Diaoling and forgot my body. A peculiar magpie brushed against my forehead, wandered off to the chestnut grove, and there forgot its true self. And the keeper of the chestnut grove, to my great shame, took me for a trespasser! That is why I am unhappy."

Yangzi, on his way to Song, stopped for the night at an inn. The innkeeper had two concubines, one beautiful, the other ugly. But the ugly one was treated as a lady of rank, while the beautiful one was treated as a menial. When Yangzi asked the reason, a young boy of the inn replied, "The beautiful one is only too aware of her beauty, so we don't think of her as beautiful. The ugly one is only too aware of her ugliness, so we don't think of her as ugly."

Yangzi said, “Remember that, my students! If you act worthily but rid yourself of the awareness that you are acting worthily, then where can you go that you will not be loved?”

1. Following the emendation suggested by Yu Yue. The word “things” in this passage includes mankind.

2. Xiong Yiliao, a man of Chu, is mentioned in *Zuozhuan*, Duke Ai, sixteenth year (479 BCE); the “marquis of Lu” is presumably the Duke Ai of Lu.

3. That is, they never venture forth in groups. I follow texts that read *qie* in place of *dan* and adopt Ma Xulun’s interpretation of *xusu*.

4. Meaning very doubtful; Ma Xulun opines that something has dropped out of the text.

5. There were sixteen bells in a set, arranged in two tiers. Most commentators take the “platform” to be an altar on which a sacrifice was made in preparation for the casting of the bells, though Ma Xulun believes it was connected with the actual casting process.

6. Prince Qingji, son of King Liao of Wu, had fled to the state of Wei to escape from his father’s assassin and successor, King Helü, who took the throne of Wu in 514 BCE.

7. The text has the *de*, which means “gain,” which may be either an error for the *de* meaning “virtue” or a deliberate play on the two words. See p. 129, n. 8.

8. Reading *shen* (*zhen* with the heart radical).

9. On Prince Bi Gan, who was put to death by the tyrant Zhou, see p. 23. Zhuangzi is presumably explaining why he does not take public office in the troubled times in which he lived.

10. The lord of Yan appeared in sec. 14, p. 111; he was presumably a sage ruler of antiquity, identified by some commentators with Shennong. Some texts give his name as “the lord of Piao.”

11. Following Wang Niansun’s emendation.

21

TIAN ZIFANG

Tian Zifang was sitting in attendance on Marquis Wen of Wei.[1] When he repeatedly praised one Qi Gong, Marquis Wen asked, “Is Qi Gong your teacher?”

“No,” replied Zifang. “He comes from the same neighborhood as I do. Discussing the Way with him, I’ve found he often hits the mark—that’s why I praise him.”

“Have you no teacher then?” asked Marquis Wen.

“I have,” said Zifang.

“Who is your teacher?”

“Master Shun from east of the Wall,” said Zifang.

“Then why have you never praised *him*?” asked Marquis Wen.

Zifang said, “He’s the kind of man who is True—the face of a human being, the emptiness of Heaven. He follows along and keeps tight hold of the True; pure, he can encompass all things. If men do not have the Way, he has only to put on a straight face, and they are enlightened; he causes men’s intentions to melt away. But how could any of this be worth praising!”

Zifang retired from the room, and Marquis Wen, stupefied, sat for the rest of the day in silence. Then he called to the ministers who stood in attendance on him and said, “How far away he is—the gentleman of Complete Virtue! I used to think that the words of the wisdom of the sages and the practices of benevolence and righteousness were the highest ideal. But now that I have heard about Zifang’s teacher, my body has fallen apart, and I feel no inclination to move; my mouth is manacled, and I feel no inclination to speak. These things that I have been studying are so many clay dolls[2]—nothing more! This state of Wei is in truth only a burden to me!”

Wenbo Xuezi, journeying to Qi, stopped along the way in the state of Lu.[3] A man of Lu requested an interview with him, but Wenbo Xuezi said, “No indeed! I have heard of the gentlemen of these middle states—enlightened on the subject of ritual principles but stupid in their understanding of men’s hearts. I have no wish to see any such person.”

He arrived at his destination in Qi and, on his way home, had stopped again in Lu when the man once more requested an interview. Wenbo Xuezi said, “In the past he made an attempt to see me, and now he’s trying again. He undoubtedly has some means by which he hopes to ‘save’ me!”

He went out to receive the visitor and returned to his own rooms with a sigh. The following day, he received the visitor once more and once more returned with a sigh. His groom said, “Every time you receive this visitor, you come back sighing. Why is that?”

“I told you before, didn’t I? These men of the middle states are enlightened in ritual principles but stupid in the understanding of men’s hearts. Yesterday, when this man came to see me, his advancings and retirings were as precise as though marked by compass or T square. In looks and bearing, he was now a dragon, now a tiger. He remonstrated with me as though he were my son, offered me guidance as though he were my father! That is why I sighed.”

Confucius also went for an interview with Wenbo Xuezi but returned without having spoken a word. Zilu said, “You have been wanting to see Wenbo Xuezi for a long time. Now you had the chance to see him; why didn’t you say anything?”

Confucius said, “With that kind of man, one glance tells you that the Way is there before you. What room does that leave for any possibility of speech?”

* * *

Yan Yuan said to Confucius, “Master, when you walk, I walk; when you trot, I trot; when you gallop, I gallop. But when you break into the kind of dash that leaves even the dust behind, all I can do is stare after you in amazement!”

“Hui, what are you talking about?” asked the Master.

“When you walk, I walk—that is, I can speak just as you speak. When you trot, I trot—that is, I can make discriminations just as you do. When you gallop, I gallop—that is, I can expound the Way just as you do. But when you break into the kind of dash that leaves even the dust behind and all I can do is stare after you in amazement—by that I mean that you do not have to speak to be trusted, that you are catholic and not partisan,[4] that although you lack the regalia of high office, the people still congregate before you, and with all this, you do not know why it is so.”

“Ah,” said Confucius, “we had best look into this! There is no grief greater than the death of the mind—beside it, the death of the body is a minor matter. The sun rises out of the east, sets at the end of the west, and each one of the ten thousand things moves side by side with it. Creatures that have eyes and feet must wait for it before their success is complete. Its rising means they may go on living; its setting means they perish. For all the ten thousand things, it is thus. They must wait for something before they can die, wait for something before they can live. Having once received this fixed bodily form, I will hold on to it, unchanging, in this way waiting for the end. I move after the model of other things, day and night without break, but I do not know what the end will be. Mild, genial, my bodily form takes shape. I understand my fate, but I cannot fathom what has gone before it. This is the way I proceed, day after day.

“I have gone through life linked arm in arm with you, yet now you fail [to understand me]—is this not sad? You see in me, I suppose, the part that can be seen—but that part is already over and gone. For you to come looking for it, thinking it still exists, is like looking for a horse after the horse fair is over.[5] I serve you best when I have utterly forgotten you,

and you likewise serve me best when you have utterly forgotten me. But even so, why should you repine? Even if you forget the old me, I will still possess something that will not be forgotten!"[6]

Confucius went to call on Lao Dan. Lao Dan had just finished washing his hair and had spread it over his shoulders to dry. Utterly motionless, he did not even seem to be human. Confucius, hidden from sight,[7] stood waiting and then, after some time, presented himself and exclaimed, "Did my eyes play tricks on me, or was that really true? A moment ago, sir, your form and body seemed stiff as an old dead tree, as though you had forgotten things, taken leave of men, and were standing in solitude itself!"

Lao Dan said, "I was letting my mind wander in the Beginning of things."

"What does that mean?" asked Confucius.

"The mind may wear itself out but can never understand it; the mouth may gape but can never describe it. Nevertheless, I will try explaining it to you in rough outline.

"Perfect Yin is stern and frigid; Perfect Yang is bright and glittering. The sternness and frigidity come forth from heaven; the brightness and glitter emerge from the earth;[8] the two mingle, penetrate, come together, harmonize, and all things are born therefrom. Perhaps someone manipulates the cords that draw it all together, but no one has ever seen his form. Decay, growth, fullness, emptiness, now murky, now bright, the sun shifting, the moon changing phase—day after day these things proceed, yet no one has seen him bringing them about. Life has its sproutings, death its destination, end and beginning tail one another in unbroken round, and no one has ever heard of their coming to a stop. If it is not as I have described it, then who else could the Ancestor of all this be?"

Confucius said, "May I ask what it means to wander in such a place?"

Lao Dan said, "It means to attain Perfect Beauty and Perfect Happiness. He who attains Perfect Beauty and wanders in Perfect Happiness may be called the Perfect Man."

Confucius said, "I would like to hear by what means this may be accomplished."

"Beasts that feed on grass do not fret over a change of pasture; creatures that live in water do not fret over a change of stream. They accept the minor shift as long as the all-important constant is not lost. [Be like them,] and joy, anger, grief, and happiness can never enter your breast. In this world, the ten thousand things come together in One; and if you can find that One and become identical with it, then your four limbs and hundred joints will become dust and sweepings; life and death, beginning and end, will be mere day and night, and nothing whatever can confound you—certainly not the trifles of gain or loss, good or bad fortune!

"A man will discard the servants who wait on him as though they were so much earth or mud, for he knows that his own person is of more worth than the servants who tend it. Worth lies within yourself, and no external shift will cause it to be lost. And since the ten thousand transformations continue without even the beginning of an end, how could they be enough to bring anxiety to your mind? He who practices the Way understands all this."[9]

Confucius said, "Your virtue, sir, is the very counterpart of Heaven and earth, and yet even you must employ these perfect teachings in order to cultivate your mind. Who, then,

even among the fine gentlemen of the past, could have avoided such labors?"

"Not so!" said Lao Dan. "The murmuring of the water is its natural talent, not something that it does deliberately. The Perfect Man stands in the same relationship to virtue. Without cultivating it, he possesses it to such an extent that things cannot draw away from him. It is as natural as the height of heaven, the depth of the earth, the brightness of sun and moon. What is there to be cultivated?"

When Confucius emerged from the interview, he reported what had passed to Yan Hui, saying, "As far as the Way is concerned, I was a mere gnat in the vinegar jar! If the Master hadn't taken off the lid for me, I would never have understood the Great Integrity of Heaven and earth!"

Zhuangzi went to see Duke Ai of Lu. Duke Ai said, "We have a great many Confucians here in the state of Lu, but there seem to be very few men who study your methods, sir!"

"There are few Confucians in the state of Lu!" said Zhuangzi.

"But the whole state of Lu is dressed in Confucian garb!" said Duke Ai. "How can you say they are few?"

"I have heard," said Zhuangzi, "that the Confucians wear round caps on their heads to show that they understand the cycles of heaven, that they walk about in square shoes to show that they understand the shape of the earth, and that they tie ornaments in the shape of a broken disk at their girdles in order to show that when the time comes for decisive action, they must 'make the break.' But a gentleman may embrace a doctrine without necessarily wearing the garb that goes with it, and he may wear the garb without necessarily comprehending the doctrine. If Your Grace does not believe this is so, then why not try issuing an order to the state proclaiming: 'All those who wear the garb without practicing the doctrine that goes with it will be sentenced to death!'"

Duke Ai did in fact issue such an order, and within five days there was no one in the state of Lu who dared wear Confucian garb. Only one old man came in Confucian dress and stood in front of the duke's gate. The duke at once summoned him and questioned him on affairs of state, and though the discussion took a thousand turnings and ten thousand shifts, the old man was never at a loss for words. Zhuangzi said, "In the whole state of Lu, then, there is only one man who is a real Confucian. How can you say there are a great many of them?"

* * *

Boli Xi did not let title and stipend get inside his mind. He fed the cattle and the cattle grew fat, and this fact made Duke Mu of Qin forget Boli Xi's lowly position and turn over the government to him.[10] Shun, the man of the Yu clan, did not let life and death get inside his mind. So he was able to influence others.[11]

Lord Yuan of Song wanted to have some pictures painted. The crowd of court clerks all gathered in his presence, received their drawing panels,[12] and took their places in line, licking their brushes, mixing their inks; so many of them that there were more outside the room than inside it. There was one clerk who arrived late, sauntering in without the

slightest haste. When he received his drawing panel, he did not look for a place in line but went straight to his own quarters. The ruler sent someone to see what he was doing, and it was found that he had taken off his robes, stretched out his legs, and was sitting there naked. “Very good,” said the ruler. “This is a true artist!”

King Wen was seeing the sights at Zang when he spied an old man fishing.[13] Yet his fishing wasn’t really fishing. He didn’t fish as though he were fishing for anything but as though it were his constant occupation to fish. King Wen wanted to summon him and hand over the government to him, but he was afraid that the high officials and his uncles and brothers would be uneasy. He thought perhaps he had better forget the matter and let it rest, and yet he couldn’t bear to deprive the hundred clans of such a Heaven-sent opportunity. At dawn the next day he therefore reported to his ministers, saying, “Last night I dreamed I saw a fine man, dark complexioned and bearded, mounted on a dappled horse that had red hoofs on one side. He commanded me, saying, ‘Hand over your rule to the old man of Zang—then perhaps the ills of the people may be cured!’

The ministers, awestruck, said, “It was the king, your late father!”

“Then perhaps we should divine to see what ought to be done,” said King Wen.

“It is the command of your late father!” said the ministers. “Your Majesty must have no second thoughts. What need is there for divination?”

In the end, therefore, the king had the old man of Zang escorted to the capital and handed over the government to him, but the regular precedents and laws remained unchanged, and not a single new order was issued.

At the end of three years, King Wen made an inspection tour of the state. He found that the local officials had smashed their gate bars and disbanded their cliques, that the heads of government bureaus achieved no special distinction, and that persons entering the four borders from other states no longer ventured to bring their own measuring cups and bushels with them. The local officials had smashed their gate bars and disbanded their cliques because they had learned to identify with their superiors.[14] The heads of government bureaus achieved no special distinction because they looked on all tasks as being of equal distinction. Persons entering the four borders from other states no longer ventured to bring their own measuring cups and bushels with them because the feudal lords had ceased to distrust the local measures.

King Wen thereupon concluded that he had found a Great Teacher, and facing north as a sign of respect, he asked, “Could these methods of government be extended to the whole world?”

But the old man of Zang looked blank and gave no answer, evasively mumbling some excuse; and when orders went out the next morning to make the attempt, the old man ran away the very same night and was never heard of again.

Yan Yuan questioned Confucius about this story, saying, “King Wen didn’t amount to very much after all, did he! And why did he have to resort to that business about the dream?”

"Quiet!" said Confucius. "No more talk from you! King Wen was perfection itself—how can there be any room for carping and criticism! The dream—that was just a way of getting out of a moment's difficulty."

Lie Yukou was demonstrating his archery to Bohun Wuren.[15] He drew the bow as far as it would go, placed a cup of water on his elbow, and let fly. One arrow had no sooner left his thumb ring than a second was resting in readiness beside his arm guard, and all the while he stood like a statue.[16] Bohun Wuren said, "This is the archery of an archer, not the archery of a nonarcher! Try climbing up a high mountain with me, scrambling over the steep rocks to the very brink of an eight-hundred-foot chasm—then we'll see what kind of shooting you can do!"

Accordingly, they proceeded to climb a high mountain, scrambling over the steep rocks to the brink of an eight-hundred-foot chasm. There Bohun Wuren, turning his back to the chasm, walked backward until his feet projected halfway off the edge of the cliff, bowed to Lie Yukou, and invited him to come forward and join him. But Lie Yukou cowered on the ground, sweat pouring down all the way to his heels. Bohun Wuren said, "The Perfect Man may stare at the blue heavens above, dive into the Yellow Springs below, ramble to the end of the eight directions, yet his spirit and bearing undergo no change. And here you are in this cringing, eye-batting state of mind—if you tried to take aim now, you would be in certain peril!"

Jian Wu said to Sunshu Ao, "Three times you have become premier, yet you didn't seem to glory in it.[17] Three times you were dismissed from the post, but you never looked glum over it. At first I doubted that this was really true, but now I stand before your very nose and see how calm and unconcerned you are. Do you have some unique way of using your mind?"

Sunshu Ao replied, "How am I any better than other men? I considered that the coming of such an honor could not be fended off and that its departure could not be prevented. As far as I was concerned, the question of profit or loss did not rest with me, and so I had no reason to put on a glum expression, that was all. How am I any better than other men? Moreover, I'm not really certain whether the glory resides in the premiership or in me. If it resides in the premiership, then it means nothing to me. And if it resides in me, then it means nothing to the premiership. Now I'm about to go for an idle stroll, to go gawking in the four directions. What leisure do I have to worry about who holds an eminent position and who a humble one?"

Confucius, hearing of the incident, said, "He was a True Man of old, the kind that the wise cannot argue with, the beautiful cannot seduce, the violent cannot intimidate; even Fu Xi or the Yellow Emperor could not have befriended him. Life and death are great affairs, and yet they are no change to him—how much less to him are things like titles and stipends! With such a man, his spirit may soar over Mount Tai without hindrance, may plunge into the deepest springs without getting wet, may occupy the meanest, most humble

position without distress. He fills all Heaven and earth, and the more he gives to others, the more he has for himself."

The king of Chu was sitting with the lord of Fan.[18] After a little while, three of the king of Chu's attendants reported that the state of Fan had been destroyed. The lord of Fan said, "The destruction of Fan is not enough to make me lose what I am intent on preserving.[19] And if the destruction of Fan is not enough to make me lose what I preserve, then the preservation of Chu is not enough to make it preserve what it ought to preserve. Looking at it this way, then, Fan has not yet begun to be destroyed, and Chu has not yet begun to be preserved!"

1. Marquis Wen (r. 424–387 BCE) guided the state of Wei during the crucial years when it first won recognition as an independent feudal domain; he is famous in history as a patron of learning. Tian Zifang appears to have been one of the philosophers attracted to his court.

2. That melt and turn to mud when the rains come.

3. Wenbo Xuezi is vaguely identified as a man of the state of Chu in the south; hence he refers to the states of Qi and Lu, the centers of Confucian learning, as "middle states."

4. Compare *Analects* II, 14: "The gentleman is catholic and not partisan."

5. Reading *kong* in place of *tang* in accordance with Ma Xulun's suggestion.

6. This beautiful passage, whose exact meaning I only dimly follow, presents numerous difficulties of interpretation. The verb *fu*, which I have translated as "serve," may be taken in many different ways.

7. Following Zhang Binglin's interpretation.

8. Ordinarily, the yang principle represents heaven, and the yin principle, earth. Whether the reversal of their roles here is deliberate or the result of textual error, I do not know. Waley (*Three Ways of Thought*, p. 16) emends the text to put them in their usual order.

9. One may also, like Guo Xiang, take the word *jie* (understand) to mean "free"; that is, "He who practices the Way is freed from all this." Compare sec. 6, p. 48: "the freeing of the bound."

10. Boli Xi, a statesman of the seventh century BCE, was taken captive when his state was overthrown and, for a time, led the life of a lowly cattle tender. His worth was eventually recognized by Duke Mu of Qin, who made him his high minister.

11. Shun's parents and younger brother made several attempts to kill him, but he did not allow this to alter his filial behavior.

12. Following Ma Xulun's emendation. It is not clear just what kind of paintings the ruler of Song is commissioning, and some commentators take them to be mere maps. But the

description of the “true artist” that follows suggests a more creative type of activity.

13. King Wen, honored as the founder of the Zhou dynasty, was one of the ancient sages most often and extravagantly praised by Confucius and his followers.

14. The term “identifying with one’s superior” is taken from the teachings of Mozi. According to this doctrine, each class of society is to follow the orders and ethical teaching of the class above, the whole hierarchy being headed by the Son of Heaven, in this case, King Wen.

15. Lie Yukou appeared in sec. 1, p. 3; Bohun Wuren, in sec. 5, p. 35.

16. In the interpretation of these archery terms, I follow Ma Xulun’s emendations.

17. Jian Wu appeared in sec. 1, p. 4, and sec. 7, p. 55. Sunshu Ao was a sixth-century statesman of Chu.

18. Fan was a small state subservient to the much larger and more powerful state of Chu, which eventually overthrew it.

19. That is, the Way. The whole passage is a play on the two levels of meaning, political and philosophical, of the words “destruction” (*wang*) and “preservation” (*cun*).

22

KNOWLEDGE WANDERED NORTH

Knowledge wandered north to the banks of the Black Waters, climbed the Knoll of Hidden Heights, and there by chance came upon Do-Nothing-Say-Nothing. Knowledge said to Do-Nothing-Say-Nothing, “There are some things I’d like to ask you. What sort of pondering, what sort of cogitation does it take to know the Way? What sort of surroundings, what sort of practices does it take to find rest in the Way? What sort of path, what sort of procedure will get me to the Way?”

Three questions he asked, but Do-Nothing-Say-Nothing didn’t answer. It wasn’t that he just didn’t answer—he didn’t know how to answer!

Knowledge, failing to get any answer, returned to the White Waters of the south, climbed the summit of Dubiety Dismissed, and there caught sight of Wild-and-Witless. Knowledge put the same questions to Wild-and-Witless. “Ah—I know!” said Wild-and-Witless. “And I’m going to tell you.” But just as he was about to say something, he forgot what it was he was about to say.

Knowledge, failing to get any answer, returned to the imperial palace, where he was received in audience by the Yellow Emperor, and posed his questions. The Yellow Emperor said, “Only when there is no pondering and no cogitation will you get to know the Way. Only when you have no surroundings and follow no practices will you find rest in the Way. Only when there is no path and no procedure can you get to the Way.”

Knowledge said to the Yellow Emperor, “You and I know, but those other two that I asked didn’t know. Which of us is right, I wonder?”

The Yellow Emperor said, “Do-Nothing-Say-Nothing—he’s the one who is truly right. Wild-and-Witless appears to be so. But you and I in the end are nowhere near it. Those who know do not speak; those who speak do not know. Therefore the sage practices the teaching that has no words.[1] The Way cannot be brought to light; its virtue cannot be forced to come. But benevolence—you can put that into practice; you can discourse[2] on righteousness, you can dupe one another with rites. So it is said, When the Way was lost, then there was virtue; when virtue was lost, then there was benevolence; when benevolence was lost, then there was righteousness; when righteousness was lost, then there were rites. Rites are the frills of the Way and the forerunners of disorder.[3] So it is said, He who practices the Way does less every day, does less and goes on doing less until he reaches the point where he does nothing; does nothing and yet there is nothing that is not done.[4] Now

that we've already become 'things,' if we want to return again to the Root, I'm afraid we'll have a hard time of it! The Great Man—he's the only one who might find it easy.

"Life is the companion of death; death is the beginning of life. Who understands their workings? Man's life is a coming-together of breath. If it comes together, there is life; if it scatters, there is death. And if life and death are companions to each other, then what is there for us to be anxious about?

"The ten thousand things are really one. We look on some as beautiful because they are rare or unearthly; we look on others as ugly because they are foul and rotten. But the foul and rotten may turn into the rare and un-earthly, and the rare and unearthly may turn into the foul and rotten. So it is said, You have only to comprehend the one breath that is the world. The sage never ceases to value oneness."

Knowledge said to the Yellow Emperor, "I asked Do-Nothing-Say-Nothing, and he didn't reply to me. It wasn't that he merely didn't reply to me—he didn't know how to reply to me. I asked Wild-and-Witless, and he was about to explain to me, though he didn't explain anything. It wasn't that he wouldn't explain to me—but when he was about to explain, he forgot what it was. Now I have asked you, and you know the answer. Why, then, do you say that you are nowhere near being right?"

The Yellow Emperor said, "Do-Nothing-Say-Nothing is the one who is truly right—because he doesn't know. Wild-and-Witless appears to be so—because he forgets. But you and I in the end are nowhere near it—because we know."

Wild-and-Witless heard of the incident and concluded that the Yellow Emperor knew what he was talking about.

Heaven and earth have their great beauties but do not speak of them; the four seasons have their clear-marked regularity but do not discuss it; the ten thousand things have their principles of growth but do not expound them. The sage seeks out the beauties of Heaven and earth and masters the principles of the ten thousand things. Thus it is that the Perfect Man does not act, the Great Sage does not move—they have perceived [the Way of] Heaven and earth, we may say. This Way, whose spiritual brightness is of the greatest purity, joins with others in a hundred transformations. Already things are living or dead, round or square; no one can comprehend their source, yet here are the ten thousand things in all their stir and bustle, just as they have been since ancient times. Things as vast as the Six Realms have never passed beyond the border [of the Way]; things as tiny as an autumn hair must wait for it to achieve bodily form. There is nothing in the world that does not bob and sink to the end of its days, lacking fixity. The yin and yang, the four seasons follow one another in succession, each keeping to its proper place. Dark and hidden, [the Way] seems not to exist, and yet it is there; lush and unbounded, it possesses no form but only spirit; the ten thousand things are shepherded by it, though they do not understand it—this is what is called the Source, the Root. This is what may be perceived in Heaven.

Nie Que asked Piyi about the Way. Piyi said, "Straighten up your body, unify your vision, and the harmony of Heaven will come to you. Call in your knowledge, unify your bearing,

and the spirits will come to dwell with you. Virtue will be your beauty, the Way will be your home, and stupid as a newborn calf, you will not try to find out the reason why."

Before he had finished speaking, however, Nie Que fell sound asleep. Piyi, immensely pleased, left and walked away, singing this song:

> Body like a withered corpse,
> mind like dead ashes,
> true in the realness of knowledge,
> not one to go searching for reasons,
> dim dim, dark dark,
> mindless, you cannot consult with him,
> what kind of man is this?

Shun asked Cheng, "Is it possible to gain possession of the Way?"

"You don't even have possession of your own body—how could you possibly gain possession of the Way!"

"If I don't have possession of my own body, then who does?" said Shun.

"It is a form lent you by Heaven and earth. You do not have possession of life—it is a harmony lent by Heaven and earth. You do not have possession of your inborn nature and fate—they are contingencies lent by Heaven and earth. You do not have possession of your sons and grandsons—they are castoff skins lent by Heaven and earth. So it is best to walk without knowing where you are going, stay home without knowing what you are guarding, eat without knowing what you are tasting. All is the work of the Powerful Yang[5] in the world. How, then, could it be possible to gain possession of anything?"

Confucius said to Lao Dan, "Today you seem to have a moment of leisure—may I venture to ask about the Perfect Way?"

Lao Dan said, "You must fast and practice austerities, cleanse and purge your mind, wash and purify your inner spirit, destroy and do away with your knowledge. The Way is abstruse and difficult to describe. But I will try to give you a rough outline of it.

"The bright and shining is born out of deep darkness; the ordered is born out of formlessness; pure spirit is born out of the Way. The body is born originally from this purity,[6] and the ten thousand things give bodily form to one another through the process of birth. Therefore those with nine openings in the body are born from the womb; those with eight openings are born from eggs. [In the case of the Way,] there is no trace of its coming, no limit to its going. Gateless, roomless, it is airy and open as the highways of the four directions. He who follows along with it will be strong in his four limbs, keen and penetrating in intellect, sharp eared, bright eyed, wielding his mind without wearying it, responding to things without prejudice. Heaven cannot help but be high; earth cannot help but be broad; the sun and moon cannot help but revolve; the ten thousand things cannot help but flourish. Is this not the Way?

"Breadth of learning does not necessarily mean knowledge; eloquence does not necessarily mean wisdom—therefore the sage rids himself of these things. That which can

be increased without showing any sign of increase; that which can be diminished without suffering any diminution—that is what the sage holds fast to. Deep, unfathomable, it is like the sea; tall and craggy,[7] it ends only to begin again, transporting and weighing the ten thousand things without ever failing them. The 'Way of the gentleman,' [which you preach,] is mere superficiality, is it not? But what the ten thousand things all look to for sustenance, what never fails them—is this not the real Way?

"Here is a man of the Middle Kingdom, neither yin nor yang, living between heaven and earth. For a brief time only, he will be a man, and then he will return to the Ancestor. Look at him from the standpoint of the Source, and his life is a mere gathering together of breath. And whether he dies young or lives to a great old age, the two fates will scarcely differ—a matter of a few moments, you might say. How, then, is it worth deciding that Yao is good and Jie is bad?

"The fruits of trees and vines have their patterns and principles. Human relationships, too, difficult as they are, have their relative order and precedence. The sage, encountering them, does not go against them; passing beyond, he does not cling to them. To respond to them in a spirit of harmony—this is virtue; to respond to them in a spirit of fellowship—this is the Way. Thus it is that emperors have raised themselves up and kings have climbed to power.

"Man's life between heaven and earth is like the passing of a white colt glimpsed through a crack in the wall—whoosh!—and that's the end. Overflowing, starting forth, there is nothing that does not come out; gliding away, slipping into silence, there is nothing that does not go back in. Having been transformed, things find themselves alive; another transformation and they are dead. Living things grieve over it, mankind mourns. But it is like the untying of the Heaven-lent bow-bag, the unloading of the Heavenlent satchel—a yielding, a mild mutation, and the soul and spirit are on their way, the body following after, on at last to the Great Return.

"The formless moves to the realm of form; the formed moves back to the realm of formlessness. This all men alike understand. But it is not something to be reached by striving. The common run of men all alike debate how to reach it. But those who have reached it do not debate, and those who debate have not reached it. Those who peer with bright eyes will never catch sight of it. Eloquence is not as good as silence. The Way cannot be heard; to listen for it is not as good as plugging up your ears. This is called the Great Acquisition."

Master Dongguo[8] asked Zhuangzi, "This thing called the Way—where does it exist?"

Zhuangzi, said, "There's no place it doesn't exist."

"Come," said Master Dongguo, "you must be more specific!"

"It is in the ant."

"As low a thing as that?"

"It is in the panic grass."

"But that's lower still!"

"It is in the tiles and shards."

“How can it be so low?”

“It is in the piss and shit!”

Master Dongguo made no reply.

Zhuangzi said, “Sir, your questions simply don’t get at the substance of the matter. When Inspector Huo asked the superintendent of the market how to test the fatness of a pig by pressing it with the foot, he was told that the lower down on the pig you press, the nearer you come to the truth. But you must not expect to find the Way in any particular place—there is no thing that escapes its presence! Such is the Perfect Way, and so too are the truly great words. ‘Complete,’ ‘universal,’ ‘all-inclusive’—these three are different words with the same meaning. All point to a single reality.

“Why don’t you try wandering with me to the Palace of Not-Even-Anything—identity and concord will be the basis of our discussions, and they will never come to an end, never reach exhaustion. Why not join with me in inaction, in tranquil quietude, in hushed purity, in harmony and leisure? Already my will is vacant and blank. I go nowhere and don’t know how far I’ve gotten. I go and come and don’t know where to stop. I’ve already been there and back, and I don’t know when the journey is done. I ramble and relax in unbordered vastness; Great Knowledge enters in, and I don’t know where it will ever end.

“That which treats things as things is not limited by things. Things have their limits—the so-called limits of things. The unlimited moves to the realm of limits; the limited moves to the unlimited realm. We speak of the filling and emptying, the withering and decay of things. [The Way] makes them full and empty without itself filling or emptying; it makes them wither and decay without itself withering or decaying. It establishes root and branch but knows no root and branch itself; it determines when to store up or scatter but knows no storing or scattering itself.”

A Hegan and Shennong were studying together under Old Longji.[9] Shennong sat leaning on his armrest, the door shut, taking his daily nap, when at midday A Hegan threw open the door, entered, and announced, “Old Long is dead!”

Shennong, still leaning on the armrest, reached for his staff and jumped to his feet. Then he dropped the staff with a clatter and began to laugh, saying, “My Heavensent Master—he knew how cramped and mean, how arrogant and willful I am, and so he abandoned me and died. My Master went off and died without ever giving me any wild words to open up my mind!”

Yan Gangdiao, hearing of the incident, said, “He who embodies the Way has all the gentlemen of the world flocking to him. As far as the Way goes, Old Long hadn’t gotten hold of a piece as big as the tip of an autumn hair, hadn’t found his way into one ten-thousandth of it—but even he knew enough to keep his wild words stored away and to die with them unspoken. How much more so, then, in the case of a man who embodies the Way! Look for it, but it has no form; listen, but it has no voice. Those who discourse on it with other men speak of it as dark and mysterious. The Way that is discoursed on is not the Way at all! “

At this point, Grand Purity asked No-End, “Do *you* understand the Way?”

“I don’t understand it,” said No-End.

Then he asked No-Action, and No-Action said, “I understand the Way.”

“You say you understand the Way—is there some trick to it?

“There is.”

“What’s the trick?”

No-Action said, “I understand that the Way can exalt things and can humble them, that it can bind them together and can cause them to disperse.[10] This is the trick by which I understand the Way.”

Grand Purity, having received these various answers, went and questioned No-Beginning, saying, “If this is how it is, then between No-End’s declaration that he doesn’t understand and No-Action’s declaration that he does, which is right and which is wrong?”

No-Beginning said, “Not to understand is profound; to understand is shallow. Not to understand is to be on the inside; to understand is to be on the outside.”

Thereupon Grand Purity gazed up[11] and sighed, saying, “Not to understand is to understand? To understand is not to understand? Who understands the understanding that does not understand?”

No-Beginning said, “The Way cannot be heard; heard, it is not the Way. The Way cannot be seen; seen, it is not the Way. The Way cannot be described; described, it is not the Way. That which gives form to the formed is itself formless—can you understand that? There is no name that fits the Way.”

No-Beginning continued, “He who, when asked about the Way, gives an answer does not understand the Way; and he who asked about the Way has not really heard the Way explained. The Way is not to be asked about, and even if it is asked about, there can be no answer. To ask about what cannot be asked about is to ask for the sky. To answer what cannot be answered is to try to split hairs. If the hair splitter waits for the sky asker,[12] then neither will ever perceive the time and space that surround them on the outside or understand the Great Beginning that is within. Such men can never trek across the Kunlun, can never wander in the Great Void!”[13]

Bright Dazzlement asked Nonexistence, “Sir, do you exist, or do you not exist?” Unable to obtain any answer, Bright Dazzlement stared intently at the other’s face and form—all was vacuity and blankness. He stared all day but could see nothing, listened but could hear no sound, stretched out his hand but grasped nothing. “Perfect!” exclaimed Bright Dazzlement. “Who can reach such perfection? I can conceive of the existence of nonexistence but not of the nonexistence of nonexistence. Yet this man has reached the stage of the nonexistence of nonexistence.[14] How could I ever reach such perfection!”

The grand marshal’s buckle maker was eighty years old, yet he had not lost the tiniest part of his old dexterity. The grand marshal said, “What skill you have! Is there a special way to this?”

“I have a way.[15] From the time I was twenty, I have loved to forge buckles. I never look at other things—if it’s not a buckle, I don’t bother to examine it.”

Using this method of deliberately *not* using other things, he was able, over the years, to get some use out of it. And how much greater would a man be if, by the same method, he reached the point where there was nothing that he did not use! All things would come to depend on him.

Ran Qiu asked Confucius, "Is it possible to know anything about the time before Heaven and earth existed?"

Confucius said, "It is—the past is the present."

Ran Qiu, failing to receive any further answer, retired. The following day he went to see Confucius again and said, "Yesterday I asked if it were possible to know anything about the time before Heaven and earth existed, and you, Master, replied, 'It is—the past is the present.' Yesterday that seemed quite clear to me, but today it seems very obscure. May I venture to ask what this means?"

Confucius said, "Yesterday it was clear because your spirit took the lead in receiving my words. Today, if it seems obscure, it is because you are searching for it with something other than spirit, are you not? There is no past and no present, no beginning and no end. Sons and grandsons existed before sons and grandsons existed—may we make such a statement?"

Ran Qiu had not replied when Confucius said, "Stop!—don't answer! Do not use life to give life to death. Do not use death to bring death to life.[16] Do life and death depend on each other? Both have in them that which makes them a single body. There is that which was born before Heaven and earth, but is it a thing? That which treats things as things is not a thing. Things that come forth can never precede all other things, because there already were things existing then; and before that, too, there already were things existing—so on without end. The sage's love of mankind, which never comes to an end, is modeled on this principle."

Yan Yuan said to Confucius, "Master, I have heard you say that there should be no going after anything, no welcoming anything.[17] May I venture to ask how one may wander in such realms?"

Confucius said, "The men of old changed on the outside but not on the inside. The men of today change on the inside but not on the outside. He who changes along with things is identical with him who does not change. Where is there change? Where is there no change? Where is there any friction with others? Never will he treat others with arrogance. But Xiwei had his park, the Yellow Emperor his garden, Shun his palace, Tang and Wu their halls.[18] And among gentlemen, there were those like the Confucians and Mohists who became 'teachers.' As a result, people began using their 'rights' and 'wrongs' to push one another around. And how much worse are the men of today!

"The sage lives with things but does no harm to them, and he who does no harm to things cannot in turn be harmed by them. Only he who does no harm is qualified to join with other men in 'going after' or 'welcoming.'

"The mountains and forests, the hills and fields, fill us with overflowing delight, and we are joyful. Our joy has not ended when grief comes trailing it. We have no way to bar the arrival of grief and joy, no way to prevent them from departing. Alas, the men of this world are no more than travelers, stopping now at this inn, now at that, all of them run by 'things.' They know the things they happen to encounter but not those that they have never encountered. They know how to do the things they can do, but they can't do the things they don't know how to do. Not to know, not to be able to do—from these, mankind can never escape. And yet there are those who struggle to escape from the inescapable—can you help but pity them? Perfect speech is the abandonment of speech; perfect action is the abandonment of action. To be limited to understanding only what is understood—this is shallow indeed!"

1. This and the sentence that precedes it appear in *Daodejing* II and LVI, respectively.

2. Following the interpretation of Ma Xulun.

3. The sentence is nearly identical with parts of *Daodejing* XXXVIII.

4. Identical with parts of *Daodejing* XLVIII.

5. See sec. 27, p. 237.

6. Or seminal fluid; see p. 121, n. 2.

7. Probably the words "it is like the mountains," which would complete the parallelism, have dropped out at this point.

8. Literally, "East Wall Master," perhaps intended to be the same as Master Shun from east of the Wall in sec. 21.

9. On Shennong, see p. 142. Old Longji's name means Old Dragon Fortune.

10. That is, cause them to be born and to die.

11. Following Xi Tong, I read *yang* in place of z*hong*.

12. I follow Guo Xiang in the interpretation of the phrase "to ask for the sky," that is, to try to measure the immeasurable. *Neiwu*, that which is so minute there is nothing inside it—translated here as "to split hairs"—appears in sec. 33, p. 297.

13. The Kunlun, a fabulous range of mountains to the far west where the immortal spirits dwell, was mentioned on p. 141.

14. I read *wuwu*, following the parallel passage in *Huainanzi*, sec. 2.

15. Following Wang Niansun, I read *dao* in place of *shou*; compare the similar passage, p. 147.

16. Compare sec. 6, p. 46: "That which kills life does not die; that which gives life to life does not live."

17. Compare sec. 7, p. 59: “The Perfect Man uses his mind like a mirror—going after nothing, welcoming nothing, responding but not storing.”

18. The mythical figure Xiwei appeared on p. 45. The series “park,” “garden,” “palace,” “hall” probably represents a devolution from naturalness to increasing artificiality and extravagance, though the older interpretation is that these were the “groves of Academe” of high antiquity.

23

GENGSANG CHU

Among the attendants of Lao Dan was one Gengsang Chu, who had mastered a portion of the Way of Lao Dan, and with it went north to live among the Mountains of Zigzag. His servants, with their bright and knowing looks, he discharged; his concubines, with their tender and solicitous ways, he put far away from him. Instead, he shared his house with drabs and dowdies and employed the idle and indolent to wait on him. He had been living there for three years when Zigzag began to enjoy bountiful harvests, and the people of Zigzag said to one another, "When Master Gengsang first came among us, we were highly suspicious of him. But now, if we figure by the day, there never seems to be enough, but if we figure by the year, there's always some left over! It might just be that he's a sage! Why don't we make him our impersonator of the dead and pray to him, turn over to him our altars of the soil and grain?"

When Master Gengsang heard this, he faced south with a look of displeasure.[1] His disciples thought this strange, but Master Gengsang said, "Why should you wonder that I am displeased? When the breath of spring comes forth, the hundred grasses begin to grow, and later, when autumn visits them, their ten thousand fruits swell and ripen. Yet how could spring and autumn do other than they do?—the Way of Heaven has already set them in motion. I have heard that the Perfect Man dwells corpse-like in his little four-walled room, leaving the hundred clans to their uncouth and uncaring ways, not knowing where they are going, where they are headed. But now these petty people of Zigzag, in their officious and busybody fashion, want to bring their sacrificial stands and platters and make me one of their 'worthies'! Am I to be held up as a model for men? That is why, remembering the words of Lao Dan, I am so displeased!"

"But there's no need for that!" said his disciples. "In a ditch eight or sixteen feet wide, the really big fish doesn't even have room to turn around, yet the minnows and loaches think it ample. On a knoll no more than five or ten paces in height, the really big animal doesn't even have room to hide, yet the wily foxes think it ideal. Moreover, to honor the worthy and assign office to the able, according them precedence and conferring benefits on them—this has been the custom from the ancient days of the sages Yao and Shun. How much more so, then, should it be the custom among the common people of Zigzag! Why not go ahead and heed their demands, Master?"

Master Gengsang said, "Come nearer, my little ones! A beast large enough to gulp down a carriage, if he sets off alone and leaves the mountains, cannot escape the perils of net and

snare; a fish large enough to swallow a boat, if he is tossed up by the waves and left stranded, is bound to fall victim to ants and crickets.[2] Therefore birds and beasts don't mind how high they climb to escape danger; fish and turtles don't mind how deep they dive. So the man who would preserve his body and life must think only of how to hide himself away, not minding how remote or secluded the spot may be.

"And as for those two you mentioned—Yao and Shun—how are they worthy to be singled out for praise? With their nice distinctions, they are like a man who goes around willfully poking holes in people's walls and fences and planting weeds and brambles in them, like a man who picks out which hairs of his head he intends to comb before combing it, who counts the grains of rice before he cooks them. Such bustle and officiousness—how can it be of any use in saving the age? Promote men of worth and the people begin trampling over one another; employ men of knowledge and the people begin filching from one another. Such procedures will do nothing to make the people ingenuous. Instead, the people will only grow more diligent in their pursuit of gain till there are sons who kill their fathers, ministers who kill their lords, men who filch at high noon, who bore holes through walls in broad daylight. I tell you, the source of all great confusion will invariably be found to lie right there with Yao and Shun! And a thousand generations later, it will still be with us. A thousand generations later—mark my word—there will be men who will eat one another up!"

Nanrong Zhu straightened up on his mat with a perplexed look and said, "A man like myself who's already on in years—what sort of studies is he to undertake in order to attain this state you speak of?"

Master Gengsang said, "Keep the body whole, cling fast to life! Do not fall prey to the fidget and fuss of thoughts and scheming. If you do this for three years, then you can attain the state I have spoken of."

Nanrong Zhu said, "The eyes are part of the body—I have never thought them anything else—yet the blind man cannot see with his. The ears are part of the body—I have never thought them anything else—yet the deaf man cannot hear with his. The mind is part of the body—I have never thought it anything else—yet the madman cannot comprehend with his. The body, too, must be part of the body—surely they are intimately connected.[3] Yet—is it because something intervenes?—I try to seek my body, but I cannot find it. Now you tell me, 'Keep the body whole, cling fast to life! Do not fall prey to the fidget and fuss of thoughts and scheming.' As hard as I try to understand your explanation of the Way, I'm afraid your words penetrate no farther than my ears."[4]

"I've said all I can say," exclaimed Master Gengsang. "The saying goes, mud daubers have no power to transform caterpillars.[5] The little hens of Yue cannot hatch goose eggs, though the larger hens of Lu can do it well enough. It isn't that one kind of hen isn't just as henlike as the other. One can and the other can't because their talents just naturally differ in size. Now I'm afraid my talents are not sufficient to bring about any transformation in you. Why don't you go south and visit Laozi?"

Nanrong Zhu packed up his provisions and journeyed for seven days and seven nights until he came to Laozi's place. Laozi said, "Did you come from Gengsang Chu's place?"

“Yes, sir,” said Nanrong Zhu.

“Why did you come with all this crowd of people?” asked Laozi.

Nanrong Zhu, astonished, turned to look behind him.

“Don’t you know what I mean?” asked Laozi.

Nanrong Zhu hung his head in shame and then, looking up with a sigh, said, “Now I’ve even forgotten the right answer to that, so naturally I can’t ask any questions of my own.”

“What does *that* mean?” asked Laozi.

“If I say I don’t know, then people will call me an utter fool,” said Nanrong Zhu. “But if I say I do know, then, on the contrary, I will bring worry on myself. If I am not benevolent, I will harm others; but if I am benevolent, then, on the contrary, I will make trouble for myself. If I am not righteous, I will do injury to others; but if I am righteous, then, on the contrary, I will distress myself. How can I possibly escape from this state of affairs? It is these three dilemmas that are harassing me, and so through Gengsang Chu’s introduction, I have come to beg an explanation.”

Laozi said, “A moment ago, when I looked at the space between your eyebrows and eyelashes, I could tell what kind of person you are. And now what you have said confirms it. You are confused and crestfallen as though you had lost your father and mother and were setting off with a pole to fish for them in the sea. You are a lost man—hesitant and unsure, you want to return to your true form and inborn nature, but you have no way to go about it—a pitiful sight indeed!”

Nanrong Zhu asked to be allowed to repair to his quarters. There he tried to cultivate his good qualities and rid himself of his bad ones; and after ten days of making himself miserable, he went to see Laozi again. Laozi said, “You have been very diligent in your washing and purifying—as I can see from your scrubbed and shining look. But there is still something smoldering away inside you—it would seem that there are bad things there yet. When outside things trip you up and you can’t snare and seize them, then bar the inside gate. When inside things trip you up and you can’t bind and seize them, then bar the outside gate. If both outside and inside things trip you up, then even the Way and its virtue themselves can’t keep you going—much less one who is a mere follower of the Way in his actions.”[6]

Nanrong Zhu said, “When a villager gets sick and his neighbors ask him how he feels, if he is able to describe his illness, it means he can still recognize his illness as an illness—and so he isn’t all that ill. But now, if I were to ask about the Great Way, it would be like drinking medicine that made me sicker than before. What I would like to ask about is simply the basic rule of life preservation, that is all.”

Laozi said, “Ah—the basic rule of life preservation. Can you embrace the One? Can you keep from losing it? Can you, without tortoise shell or divining stalks, foretell fortune and misfortune? Do you know where to stop; do you know where to leave off? Do you know how to disregard it in others and instead look for it in yourself? Can you be brisk and unflagging? Can you be rude and unwitting? Can you be a little baby? The baby howls all day, yet its throat never gets hoarse—harmony at its height![7] The baby makes fists all day, yet its fingers never get cramped—virtue is all it holds to. The baby stares all day without

blinking its eyes—it has no preferences in the world of externals. To move without knowing where you are going, to sit at home without knowing what you are doing, traipsing and trailing about with other things, riding along with them on the same wave—this is the basic rule of life preservation, this and nothing more."

Nanrong Zhu said, "Then is this all there is to the virtue of the Perfect Man?"

"Oh, no! This is merely what is called the freeing of the ice bound, the thawing of the frozen. Can you do it?[8] The Perfect Man joins with others in seeking his food from the earth, his pleasures in Heaven. But he does not become embroiled with them in questions of people and things, profit and loss. He does not join them in their shady doings; he does not join them in their plots; he does not join them in their projects. Brisk and unflagging, he goes; rude and unwitting, he comes. This is what is called the basic rule of life preservation."

"Then is this the highest stage?"

"Not yet! Just a moment ago I said to you, 'Can you be a baby?' The baby acts without knowing what it is doing, moves without knowing where it is going. Its body is like the limb of a withered tree, its mind like dead ashes. Since it is so, no bad fortune will ever touch it, and no good fortune will come to it, either. And if it is free from good and bad fortune, then what human suffering can it undergo?"

He whose inner being rests in the Great Serenity will send forth a Heavenly light. But though he sends forth a Heavenly light, men will see him as a man, and things will see him as a thing. When a man has trained himself to this degree, then for the first time, he achieves constancy. Because he possesses constancy, men will come to lodge with him, and Heaven will be his helper. Those whom men come to lodge with may be called the people of Heaven; those whom Heaven aids may be called the sons of Heaven.

Learning means learning what cannot be learned; practicing means practicing what cannot be practiced; discriminating means discriminating what cannot be discriminated. Understanding that rests in what it cannot understand is the finest.[9] If you do not attain this goal, then Heaven the Equalizer will destroy you.

Utilize the bounty of things and let them nourish your body; withdraw into thoughtlessness, and in this way give life to your mind; be reverent of what is within and extend this same reverence to others. If you do these things and yet are visited by ten thousand evils, then all are Heaven sent and not the work of man. They should not be enough to destroy your composure; they must not be allowed to enter the Spirit Tower.[10] The Spirit Tower has its guardian, but unless it understands who its guardian is, it cannot be guarded.

If you do not perceive the sincerity within yourself and yet try to move forth, each movement will miss the mark. If outside concerns enter and are not expelled, each movement will only add failure to failure. He who does what is not good in clear and open view will be seized and punished by men. He who does what is not good in the shadow of darkness will be seized and punished by ghosts. Only he who clearly understands both men and ghosts will be able to walk alone.[11]

He who concentrates on the internal does deeds that bring no fame. He who concentrates on the external sets his mind on the hoarding of goods.[12] He who does deeds that bring no fame is forever the possessor of light. He who sets his mind on the hoarding of goods is a mere merchant. To other men's eyes, he seems to be straining on tiptoe in his greed, yet he thinks himself a splendid fellow. If a man goes along with things to the end, then things will come to him. But if he sets up barriers against things, then he will not be able to find room enough even for himself, much less for others. He who can find no room for others lacks fellow feeling, and to him who lacks fellow feeling, all men are strangers. There is no weapon more deadly than the will—even Moye is inferior to it.[13] There are no enemies greater than the yin and yang—because nowhere between heaven and earth can you escape from them. It is not that the yin and yang deliberately do you evil—it is your own mind that makes them act so.[14]

The Way permeates all things. Their dividedness is their completeness; their completeness is their impairment.[15] What is hateful about this state of dividedness is that men take their dividedness and seek to supplement it; and what is hateful about attempts to supplement it is that they are a mere supplementation of what men already have. So they go forth and forget to return—they act as though they had seen a ghost. They go forth and claim to have gotten something—what they have gotten is the thing called death. They are wiped out and choked off—already a kind of ghost themselves. Only when that which has form learns to imitate the formless will it find serenity.

It comes out from no source, it goes back in through no aperture. It has reality yet no place where it resides; it has duration yet no beginning or end. Something emerges, though through no aperture—this refers to the fact that it has reality. It has reality, yet there is no place where it resides—this refers to the dimension of space. It has duration but no beginning or end—this refers to the dimension of time. There is life, there is death, there is a coming out, there is a going back in—yet in the coming out and going back, its form is never seen.[16] This is called the Heavenly Gate. The Heavenly Gate is nonbeing. The ten thousand things come forth from nonbeing. Being cannot create being out of being; inevitably it must come forth from nonbeing. Nonbeing is absolute nonbeing, and it is here that the sage hides himself.

The understanding of the men of ancient times went a long way. How far did it go? To the point where some of them believed that things have never existed—so far, to the end, where nothing can be added. Those at the next stage thought that things exist.[17] They looked on life as a loss, on death as a return—thus they had already entered the state of dividedness. Those at the next stage said, "In the beginning, there was nonbeing. Later there was life, and when there was life, suddenly there was death. We look on nonbeing as the head, on life as the body, on death as the rump. Who knows that being and nonbeing, life and death, are a single way?[18] I will be his friend!"

These three groups, while differing in their viewpoint, belong to the same royal clan; though, as in the case of the Zhao and Jing families, whose names indicate their line of

succession, and that of the Qu family, whose name derives from its fief, they are not identical.[19]

Out of the murk, things come to life. With cunning, you declare, “We must analyze this!” You try putting your analysis in words, though it is not something to be put into words. You cannot, however, attain understanding. At the winter sacrifice, you can point to the tripe or the hoof of the sacrificial ox, which can be considered separate things and yet, in a sense, cannot be considered separate. A man who goes to look at a house walks all around the chambers and ancestral shrines, but he also goes to inspect the privies. And so for this reason, you launch into your analysis.[20]

Let me try describing this analysis of yours. It takes life as its basis and knowledge as its teacher and, from there, proceeds to assign “right” and “wrong.” So in the end, we have “names” and “realities,” and accordingly each man considers himself to be their arbiter. In his efforts to make other men appreciate his devotion to duty, for example, he will go so far as to accept death as his reward for devotion. To such men, he who is useful is considered wise; he who is of no use is considered stupid. He who is successful wins renown; he who runs into trouble is heaped with shame. Analyzers—that is what the men of today are![21] They are like the cicada and the little dove who agreed because they were two of a kind.[22]

If you step on a stranger’s foot in the marketplace, you apologize at length for your carelessness. If you step on your older brother’s foot, you give him an affectionate pat, and if you step on your parent’s foot, you know you are already forgiven. So it is said, perfect ritual makes no distinction of persons; perfect righteousness takes no account of things; perfect knowledge does not scheme; perfect benevolence knows no affection; perfect trust dispenses with gold.[23]

Wipe out the delusions of the will; undo the snares of the heart; rid yourself of the entanglements to virtue; open up the roadblocks in the Way. Eminence and wealth, recognition and authority, fame and profit—these six are the delusions of the will. Appearances and carriage, complexion and features, temperament and attitude—these six are the snares of the heart. Loathing and desire, joy and anger, grief and happiness—these six are the entanglements of virtue. Rejecting and accepting, taking and giving, knowledge and ability—these six are the roadblocks of the Way. When these four sixes no longer seethe within the breast, then you will achieve uprightness; being upright, you will be still; being still, you will be enlightened; being enlightened, you will be empty; and being empty, you will do nothing, and yet there will be nothing that is not done.

The Way is virtue’s idol. Life is virtue’s light. The in-born nature is the substance of life. The inborn nature in motion is called action. Action that has become artificial is called loss. Understanding reaches out, understanding plots. But the understanding of that which is not to be understood is a childlike stare. Action that is done because one cannot do otherwise is called virtue. Action in which there is nothing other than self is called good order. In definition, the two seem to be opposites, but in reality they agree.

Archer Yi was skilled at hitting the smallest target but clumsy in not preventing people from praising him for it. The sage is skilled in what pertains to Heaven but clumsy in what

pertains to man. To be skilled in Heavenly affairs and good at human ones as well—only the Complete Man can encompass that. Only bugs can be bugs because only bugs can abide by Heaven. The Complete Man hates Heaven and hates the Heavenly in man. How much more, then, does he hate the "I" who distinguishes between Heaven and man.[24]

If a single sparrow came within Archer Yi's range, he was sure to bring it down—impressive shooting. But he might have made the whole world into a cage, and then the sparrows would have had no place to flee to. That was the way it was when Tang caged Yi Yin by making him a cook and Duke Mu caged Boli Xi for the price of five ram skins.[25] But if you hope to get a man, you must cage him with what he likes, or you will never succeed.

The man who has had his feet cut off in punishment discards his fancy clothes—because praise and blame no longer touch him. The chained convict climbs the highest peak without fear—because he has abandoned all thought of life and death. These two are submissive[26] and un-ashamed because they have forgotten other men, and by forgetting other men, they have become men of Heaven. Therefore you may treat such men with respect, and they will not be pleased; you may treat them with contumely, and they will not be angry. Only because they are one with the Heavenly Harmony can they be like this.

If he who bursts out in anger is not really angry, then his anger is an outburst of nonanger. If he who launches into action is not really acting, then his action is a launching into inaction. He who wishes to be still must calm his energies; he who wishes to be spiritual must compose his mind; he who in his actions wishes to hit the mark must go along with what he cannot help doing. Those things that you cannot help doing—they represent the Way of the sage.

1. That is, faced in Laozi's direction. He is displeased, of course, because his worth has been discovered, whereas the true sage remains hidden and unrecognized.

2. For the sake of the parallelism, I follow Ma Xulun's suggestion in adding the character *lou*.

3. Following Ma Xulun's interpretation.

4. The whole passage, as Fukunaga points out, seems to be related to the remark in sec. 1, p. 4: "And blindness and deadness are not confined to the body alone—the understanding has them, too, as your words just now have shown."

5. According to Chinese nature lore, the mud dauber can transform mulberry caterpillars into its own young.

6. Laozi is referring perhaps to himself or to Gengsang Chu. I follow Fukunaga in the interpretation of this paragraph.

7. Almost identical with a passage in *Daodejing* LV. Parts of this paragraph are in rhyme.

8. This sentence has dropped out of most versions of the text.

9. Compare sec. 2, p. 14: “Therefore understanding that rests in what it does not understand is the finest. Who can understand discriminations that are not spoken, the Way that is not a way?”

10. “Spirit Tower,” like “Spirit Storehouse,” is a Daoist term for the mind; see the parallel passage in sec. 5, p. 39.

11. The thought and wording of this paragraph, particularly the key term “sincerity,” are closely allied to the *Zhongyong* or “The Mean,” a chapter of the *Book of Rites* that later became one of the most important texts in Confucian thought.

12. I follow Yu Yue in the interpretation of the word *chi*.

13. Moye, the famous sword of antiquity, was mentioned in sec. 6, p. 48.

14. That is, the workings of the mind or will upset the balance of the yin and yang within the body and automatically bring on illness; see sec. 4, p. 26, n. 9.

15. Compare sec. 2, p. 11: “The Way makes them all into one. Their dividedness is their completeness; their completeness is their impairment.” I follow Fukunaga in supplying the characters *chengye*, which are found in the Kōzanji text of the *Zhuangzi*, thus making the passage identical with that in sec. 2 just cited.

16. Compare sec. 2, p. 8: The “True Master … can act—that is certain. Yet I cannot see his form. He has identity but no form.”

17. The paragraph up to this point is identical with the passage in sec. 2, pp. 11–12.

18. Following Wang Niansun, I read *dao* in place of *shou*; see sec. 22, p. 185, n.

19. I follow Zhang Binglin in the interpretation of *dai*, and Ma Xulun in emending the name Jia to Qu. The Zhao, Jing, and Qu families all were branches of the ruling family of the state of Chu. Zhao and Jing were the posthumous names of the rulers from whom the families descended: Qu was originally the name of the area where the Qu family was enfeoffed.

20. That is, because analysis is possible. This paragraph is a mass of textual problems and uncertainties, and only the most tentative translation can be offered. The point seems to be that although it is possible to analyze things such as an ox or a house into their component parts, nothing is gained by the process.

21. Following the texts that omit the *fei*.

22. On the cicada and the little dove, see sec. 1, p. 1–2.

23. With seals, tallies, and other pledges of good faith.

24. That is, though he “abides by Heaven”—that is, acts with complete naturalness and spontaneity—he deplores any conscious attempt to analyze or understand this naturalness, which is the Way.

25. Tang, founder of the Shang dynasty, recognized the worth of Yi Yin when the latter was serving as one of his cooks. Boli Xi, another worthy, was ransomed from captivity by Duke Mu of Qin for the price of five ram skins. On the latter, see sec. 21, p. 172, n. 10.

26. I follow Ma Xulun's emendation.

24

XU WUGUI

Through Nü Shang, the recluse Xu Wugui obtained an interview with Marquis Wu of Wei. Marquis Wu greeted him with words of comfort, saying, “Sir, you are not well. I suppose that the hardships of life in the mountain forests have become too much for you, and so at last you have consented to come and visit me.”

“I am the one who should be comforting you!” said Xu Wugui. “What reason have you to comfort me? If you try to fulfill all your appetites and desires and indulge your likes and dislikes, then you will bring affliction to the true form of your inborn nature and fate. And if you try to deny your appetites and desires and forcibly change your likes and dislikes, then you will bring affliction to your ears and eyes. It is my place to comfort you—what reason have you to comfort me!”

Marquis Wu, looking very put out, made no reply. After a little while, Xu Wugui said, “Let me try telling you about the way I judge dogs. A dog of the lowest quality thinks only of catching its fill of prey—that is, it has the nature of a wildcat. One of middling quality always seems to be looking up at the sun.[1] But one of the highest quality acts as though it had lost its own identity. And I’m even better at judging horses than I am at judging dogs. When I judge a horse, if he can gallop as straight as a plumb line, arc as neat as a curve, turn as square as a T square, and round as true as a compass, then I’d say he was a horse for the kingdom to boast of. But not a horse for the whole world to boast of. A horse the whole world can boast of—his talents are already complete. He seems dazed, he seems lost, he seems to have become unaware of his own identity, and in this way he overtakes, passes, and leaves the others behind in the dust. You can’t tell where he’s gone to!”

Marquis Wu, greatly pleased, burst out laughing.

When Xu Wugui emerged from the interview, Nü Shang said, “Sir, may I ask what you were talking to our ruler about? When I talk to him, I talk to him back and forth about the *Odes* and *Documents*, about ritual and music; and then I talk to him up and down about the *Golden Tablets* and the *Six Bow-Cases*.[2] I have made proposals that led to outstanding success in more cases than can be counted, and yet he never so much as bared his teeth in a smile. Now what were you talking to him about that you managed to delight him in this fashion?”

Xu Wugui said, “I was merely explaining to him how I judge dogs and horses, that was all.”

“Was that all?” said Nü Shang.

“Haven’t you ever heard about the men who are exiled to Yue?” said Xu Wugui. “A few days after they have left their homelands, they are delighted if they come across an old acquaintance. When a few weeks or a month has passed, they are delighted if they come across someone they had known by sight when they were at home. And by the time a year has passed, they are delighted if they come across someone who even looks as though he might be a countryman. The longer they are away from their countrymen, the more deeply they long for them—isn’t that it? A man who has fled into the wilderness, where goosefoot and woodbine tangle the little trails of the polecat and the weasel, and has lived there in emptiness and isolation for a long time, will be delighted if he hears so much as the rustle of a human footfall. And how much more so if he hears his own brothers and kin chattering and laughing at his side! It has been a long time, I think, since one who speaks like a True Man has sat chattering and laughing at our ruler’s side.”

* * *

Xu Wugui was received in audience by Marquis Wu. “Sir,” said Marquis Wu, “for a long time now, you have lived in your mountain forest, eating acorns and chestnuts, getting along on wild leeks and scallions, and scorning me completely. Now is it old age, or perhaps a longing for the taste of meat and wine, that has brought you here? Or perhaps you have come to bring a blessing to my altars of the soil and grain.”

Xu Wugui said, “I was born to poverty and lowliness and have never ventured to eat or drink any of your wine or meat, my lord. I have come in order to comfort you.”

“What?” said the ruler. “Why should you comfort me?”

“I want to bring comfort to your spirit and body.”

“What do you mean by that?” asked Marquis Wu.

Xu Wugui said, “Heaven and earth provide nourishment for all things alike. To have ascended to a high position cannot be considered an advantage; to live in lowliness cannot be considered a handicap. Now you, as the sole ruler of this land of ten thousand chariots, may tax the resources of the entire populace of your realm in nourishing the appetites of your ears and eyes, your nose and mouth. But the spirit will not permit such a way of life. The spirit loves harmony and hates licentiousness. Licentiousness is a kind of sickness, and that is why I have come to offer my comfort. I just wonder, my lord, how aware you are of your own sickness.”[3]

Marquis Wu said, “I have, in fact, been hoping to see you for a long time, sir. I would like to cherish my people, practice righteousness, and lay down the weapons of war—how would that do?”

“It won’t!” said Xu Wugui “To cherish the people is to open the way to harming them! To practice righteousness and lay down your weapons is to sow the seeds for more weapon wielding! If you go at it this way, I’m afraid you will never succeed. All attempts to create something admirable are the weapons of evil. You may think you are practicing benevolence and righteousness, but in effect you will be creating a kind of artificiality. When a model exists, copies will be made of it; when success has been gained, boasting follows; when debate[4] exists, there will be outbreaks of hostility. On the other hand, it will

not do, my lord, to have files of marching soldiers filling the whole area in your fortress towers, or ranks of cavalry drawn up before the Palace of the Black Altar. Do not store in your heart what is contrary to your interests. Do not try to outdo others in skill. Do not try to overcome others by stratagems. Do not try to conquer others in battle. If you kill the officials and people of another ruler and annex his lands, using them to nourish your personal desires and your spirit, then I cannot say which contender is the better fighter and to which the real victory belongs! If you must do something, cultivate the sincerity that is in your breast and use it to respond without opposition to the true form of Heaven and earth. Then the people will have won their reprieve from death. What need will there be for you to resort to this 'laying down of weapons'?"

The Yellow Emperor set out to visit Great Clod at Juci Mountain.[5] Fang Ming was his carriage driver, while Chang Yu rode at his right side; Zhang Ruo and Xi Peng led the horses, and Kun Hun and Gu Ji followed behind the carriage. By the time they reached the wilds of Xiangcheng, all seven sages had lost their way and could find no one to ask for directions. Just then they happened on a young boy herding horses and asked him for directions. "Do you know the way to Juci Mountain?" they inquired.

"Yes."

"And do you know where Great Clod is to be found?"

"Yes."

"What an astonishing young man!" said the Yellow Emperor. "You not only know the way to Juci Mountain, but you even know where Great Clod is to be found! Do you mind if I ask you about how to govern the empire?"

"Governing the empire just means doing what I'm doing here, doesn't it?" said the young boy. "What about it is special? When I was little, I used to go wandering within the Six Realms, but in time I contracted a disease that blurred my eyesight. An elderly gentleman advised me to mount the chariot of the sun and go wandering in the wilds of Xiangcheng, and now my illness is getting a little better. Soon I can go wandering once more, this time beyond the Six Realms. Governing the empire just means doing what I'm doing—I don't see why it has to be anything special."

"It's true that governing the empire is not something that need concern you, sir," said the Yellow Emperor. "Nevertheless, I would like to ask you how it should be done."

The young boy made excuses, but when the Yellow Emperor repeated his request, the boy said, "Governing the empire, I suppose, is not much different from herding horses. Get rid of whatever is harmful to the horses—that's all."

The Yellow Emperor, addressing the boy as "Heavenly Master," bowed twice, touching his head to the ground, and retired.

The wise man is not happy without the modulations of idea and thought; the rhetorician is not happy without the progression of argument and rebuttal; the examiner is not happy without the tasks of interrogation and intimidation. All are penned in by these things. Men who attract the attention of the age win glory at court; men who hit it off well with the people shine in public office; men of strength and sinew welcome hardship; men of bravery

and daring are spurred on by peril; men of arms and armor delight in combat; men of haggard-hermit looks reach out for fame; men of laws and regulations long for broader legislation; men of ritual and instruction revere appearances; men of benevolence and righteousness value human relationships. The farmer is not content if he does not have his work in the fields and weed patches; the merchant is not content if he does not have his affairs at the marketplace and well side. The common people work hardest when they have their sunup-to-sundown occupations; the hundred artisans are most vigorous when they are exercising their skills with tools and machines. If his goods and coins do not pile up, the greedy man frets; if his might and authority do not increase, the ambitious man grieves. Servants to circumstance and things, they delight in change, and if the moment comes when they can put their talents to use, then they cannot keep from acting. In this way, they all follow along with the turning years, letting themselves be changed by things.[6] Driving their bodies and natures on and on, they drown in the ten thousand things and, to the end of their days never turn back. Pitiful, are they not?

Zhuangzi said, "If an archer, without taking aim at the mark, just happens to hit it, and we dub him a skilled archer, then everyone in the world can be an Archer Yi—all right?"

"All right," said Huizi.

Zhuangzi said, "If there is no publicly accepted 'right' in the world, but each person takes right to be what he himself thinks is right, then everyone in the world can be a Yao—all right?"

"All right," said Huizi.

Zhuangzi said, "Well then, here are the four schools of the Confucians, Mo, Yang, and Bing[7] and, with your own, that makes five. Now which of you is, in fact, right? Or is it perhaps like the case of Lu Ju? His disciple said to him, 'Master, I have grasped your Way. I can build a fire under the cauldron in winter and make ice in summer.' 'But that is simply using the yang to attract the yang, and the yin to attract the yin,' said Lu Ju.[8] 'That is not what I call the Way! I will show you my Way!' Thereupon he tuned two lutes, placed one in the hall, and the other in an inner room. When he struck the *gong* note on one lute, the *gong* on the other lute sounded; when he struck the *jue* note, the other *jue* sounded—the pitch of the two instruments was in perfect accord. Then he changed the tuning of one string so that it no longer corresponded to any of the five notes. When he plucked this string, it set all the twenty-five strings of the other instrument to jangling. But he was still using sounds to produce his effect; in this case it just happened to be the note that governs the other notes. Now is this the way it is in your case?"[9]

Huizi said, "The followers of Confucius, Mo, Yang, and Bing often engage with me in debate, each of us trying to overwhelm the others with phrases and to silence them with shouts—but so far they have never proved me wrong. So what do you make of that?"

Zhuangzi said, "A man of Qi sold his own son into service in Song, having dubbed him Gatekeeper and maimed him;[10] but when he acquired any bells or chimes, he wrapped them up carefully to prevent breakage. Another man went looking for a lost son but was unwilling to go any farther than the border in his search—there are men as mixed up as

this, you know. Or like the man of Chu who had been maimed and sold into service as a gatekeeper and who, in the middle of the night when no one else was around, picked a fight with the boatman. Though he didn't actually arouse any criticism, what he did was enough to create the grounds for a nasty grudge."[11]

Zhuangzi was accompanying a funeral when he passed by Huizi's grave. Turning to his attendants, he said, "There was once a plasterer who, if he got a speck of mud on the tip of his nose no thicker than a fly's wing, would get his friend Carpenter Shi to slice it off for him. Carpenter Shi, whirling his hatchet with a noise like the wind, would accept the assignment and proceed to slice, removing every bit of mud without injury to the nose, while the plasterer just stood there completely unperturbed. Lord Yuan of Song, hearing of this feat, summoned Carpenter Shi and said, 'Could you try performing it for me?' But Carpenter Shi replied, 'It's true that I was once able to slice like that—but the material I worked on has been dead these many years.' Since you died, Master Hui, I have had no material to work on. There's no one I can talk to any more."

When Guan Zhong fell ill, Duke Huan went to inquire how he was.[12] "Father Zhong," he said, "you are very ill. If—can I help but say it?—if your illness should become critical, then to whom could I entrust the affairs of the state?"

Guan Zhong said, "To whom would Your Grace like to entrust them?"

"Bao Shuya," said the duke.

"That will never do! He is a fine man, a man of honesty and integrity. But he will have nothing to do with those who are not like himself. And if he once hears of some-one's error, he won't forget it to the end of his days. If he were given charge of the state, he would be sure to tangle with you on the higher level and rile the people below him. It would be no time at all before he did something you considered unpardonable."

"Well then, who will do?" asked the duke.

"If I must give an answer, then I would say that Xi Peng will do. He forgets those in high places and does not abandon those in low ones.[13] He is ashamed that he himself is not like the Yellow Emperor, and pities those who are not like himself. He who shares his virtue with others is called a sage; he who shares his talents with others is called a worthy man. If he uses his worth in an attempt to oversee others, then he will never win their support; but if he uses it to humble himself before others, then he will never fail to win their support. With such a man, there are things within the state that he doesn't bother to hear about, things within the family that he doesn't bother to look after. If I must give an answer, I would say that Xi Peng will do."

* * *

The king of Wu, boating on the Yangtze, stopped to climb a mountain noted for its monkeys. When the pack of monkeys saw him, they dropped what they were doing in terror and scampered off to hide in the deep brush. But there was one monkey who, lounging about nonchalantly, picking at things, scratching, decided to display his skill to the king. When the king shot at him, he snatched hold of the flying arrows with the greatest

nimbleness and speed. The king thereupon ordered his attendants to hurry forward and join in the shooting, and the monkey was soon captured and killed. The king turned to his friend Yan Buyi and said, “This monkey, flouting its skill, trusting to its tricks, deliberately displayed its contempt for me—so it met with this end. Take warning from it! Ah—you must never let your expression show arrogance toward others! “

When Yan Buyi returned, he put himself under the instruction of Dong Wu, learning to wipe the expression from his face, to discard delight, to excuse himself from renown—and at the end of three years, everyone in the state was praising him.

Ziai of Nanpo[14] sat leaning on his armrest, staring up at the sky and breathing. Yan Chengzi entered and said, “Master, you surpass all other things! Can you really make the body like a withered tree and the mind like dead ashes?”

“Once I lived in a mountain cave. At that time, Tian He came to pay me one visit, and the people of the state of Qi congratulated him three times.[15] I must have had hold of[16] something in order for him to find out who I was; I must have been peddling something in order for him to come and buy. If I had not had hold of something, then how would he have been able to find out who I was? If I had not been peddling something, then how would he have been able to buy? Ah, how I pitied those men who destroy themselves! Then again, I pitied those who pity others, and again, I pitied those who pity those who pity others. But all that was long ago.”

* * *

When Confucius visited Chu, the king of Chu ordered a toast. Sunshu Ao came forward and stood with the wine goblet, while Yiliao from south of the Market took some of the wine and poured a libation, saying, “[You have the wisdom of] the men of old, have you not? On this occasion, perhaps you would speak to us about it.”

Confucius said, “I have heard of the speech that is not spoken, though I have never tried to speak about it. Shall I take this occasion to speak about it now? Yiliao from south of the Market juggled a set of balls, and the trouble between the two houses was resolved. Sunshu Ao rested comfortably, waving his feather fan, and the men of Ying put away their arms. I wish I had a beak three feet long!”[17]

These were men who followed what is called the Way that is not a way, and this exchange of theirs is what is called the debate that is not spoken. Therefore, when virtue is resolved in the unity of the Way and words come to rest at the place where understanding no longer understands, we have perfection. The unity of the Way is something that virtue can never master;[18] what understanding does not understand is something that debate can never encompass. To apply names in the manner of the Confucians and Mohists is to invite evil. The sea does not refuse the rivers that come flowing eastward into it—it is the perfection of greatness. The sage embraces all heaven and earth, and his bounty extends to the whole world, yet no one knows who he is or what family he belongs to. For this reason, in life he holds no titles, in death he receives no posthumous names. Realities do not gather about him, names do not stick to him—this is what is called the Great Man.

A dog is not considered superior merely because it is good at barking; a man is not considered worthy merely because he is good at speaking. Much less, then, is he to be considered great. That which has become great does not think it worth trying to become great, much less to become virtuous. Nothing possesses a larger measure of greatness than Heaven and earth, yet when have they ever gone in search of greatness? He who understands what it means to possess greatness does not seek, does not lose, does not reject, and does not change himself for the sake of things. He returns to himself and finds the inexhaustible; he follows antiquity and discovers the imperishable—this is the sincerity of the Great Man.

Ziqi had eight sons, and lining them up in front of him, he summoned Jiufang Yin and said, "Please physiognomize my sons for me and tell me which one is destined for good fortune."

Jiufang Yin replied, "Kun—he is the one who will be fortunate."

Ziqi, both astonished and pleased, said, "How so?"

"Kun will eat the same food as the lord of a kingdom and will continue to do so to the end of his days."

Tears sprang from Ziqi's eyes, and in great dejection he said, "Why should my boy be brought to this extreme?"

"He who eats the same food as the ruler of a kingdom will bring bounty to all his three sets of relatives, not to mention his own father and mother," said Jiufang Yin. "Yet now when you hear of this, sir, you burst out crying—this will only drive the blessing away! The son is auspicious enough, but the father is decidedly inauspicious!"

Ziqi said, "Yin, what would you know about this sort of thing! You say Kun will be fortunate—but you are speaking solely of the meat and wine that are to affect his nose and mouth. How could you understand where such things come from! Suppose, although I have never been a shepherd, a flock of ewes were suddenly to appear in the southwest corner of my grounds or that, although I have no taste for hunting, a covey of quail should suddenly appear in the southeast corner—if this were not to be considered peculiar, then what would be? When my son and I go wandering, we wander through Heaven and earth. He and I seek our delight in Heaven and our food from the earth. He and I do not engage in any undertakings, do not engage in any plots, do not engage in any peculiarities. He and I ride on the sincerity of Heaven and earth and do not allow things to set us at odds with it. He and I stroll and saunter in unity, but never do we try to do what is appropriate to the occasion. Now you tell me of this vulgar and worldly 'reward' that is to come to him. As a rule, where there is some peculiar manifestation, there must invariably have been some peculiar deed to call it forth. But surely this cannot be due to any fault of my son and me—it must be inflicted by Heaven. It is for this reason that I weep!"

Not long afterward, Ziqi sent his son Kun on an errand to the state of Yan, and along the way he was seized by bandits. They considered that he would be difficult to sell as a slave in his present state but that if they cut off his feet, they could dispose of him easily.[19] Accordingly, they cut off his feet and sold him in the state of Qi. As it happened, he was

made gatekeeper of the inner chamber in the palace of Duke Kang[20] and so was able to eat meat until the end of his days.

Nie Que happened to meet Xu You. “Where are you going?” he asked.

“I’m running away from Yao.”

“Why is that?”

“Because Yao is so earnestly and everlastingly benevolent! I’m afraid he’ll make himself the laughingstock of the world. In later ages, men may even end up eating one another because of him![21] There is nothing difficult about attracting the people. Love them and they will feel affection for you; benefit them and they will flock to you; praise them and they will do their best; do something they dislike and they will scatter. Love and benefit are the products of benevolence and righteousness. There are few men who will renounce benevolence and righteousness, but many who will seek to benefit by them. To practice benevolence and righteousness in such a fashion is at best a form of insincerity, at worst a deliberate lending of weapons to the evil[22] and rapacious. Moreover, to have one man laying down decisions and regulations for the ‘benefit’ of the world is like trying to take in everything at a single glance. Yao understands that the worthy man can benefit the world, but he does not understand that he can also ruin the world. Only a man who has gotten outside the realm of ‘worthiness’ can understand that!”

There are the smug-and-satisfied, there are the precariously perched, and there are the bent-with-burdens. What I call the smug-and-satisfied are those who, having learned the words of one master, put on a smug and satisfied look, privately much pleased with themselves, considering that what they’ve gotten is quite sufficient, and not even realizing that they haven’t begun to get anything at all. These are what I call the smug-and-satisfied.

What I call the precariously perched are like the lice on a pig. They pick out a place where the bristles are long and sparse and call it their spacious mansion, their ample park; or a place in some corner of the hams or hoofs, between the nipples, or down around the haunches, and call it their house of repose, their place of profit. They do not know that one morning the butcher will give a swipe of his arm, spread out the grass, light up the fire, and that they will be roasted to a crisp along with the pig. Their advancement in the world is subject to such limitations as this, and their retirement from it is subject to similar limitations. This is what I call the precariously perched.

What I call the bent-with-burdens are those like Shun. The mutton doesn’t long for the ants; it is the ants that long for the mutton. Mutton has a rank odor, and Shun must have done rank deeds for the hundred clans to have delighted in him so. Therefore, though he changed his residence three times, each place he lived in turned into a city, and by the time he reached the wilderness of Deng, he had a hundred thousand households with him. Yao heard of the worthiness of Shun and raised him up from the barren plains, saying, “May I hope that you will come and bestow your bounty on us?” When Shun was raised up from the barren plains, he was already well along in years, and his hearing and eyesight were

failing, and yet he was not able to go home and rest. This is what I call the bent-with-burdens.

Therefore the Holy Man hates to see the crowd arriving, and if it does arrive, he does not try to be friendly with it; not being friendly with it, he naturally does nothing to benefit it. So he makes sure that there is nothing he is very close to and nothing he is very distant from. Embracing virtue, infused with harmony, he follows along with the world—this is what is called the True Man. He leaves wisdom to the ants, takes his cue from the fishes, leaves willfulness to the mutton.[23]

Use the eye to look at the eye, the ear to listen to the ear, and the mind to restore the mind. Do this, and your levelness will be as though measured with the line; your transformations will be a form of compliance. The True Man of ancient times used Heaven to deal with man; he did not use man to work his way into Heaven. The True Man of ancient times got it and lived, lost it and died, got it and died, lost it and lived. Medicines serve as an example.[24] There are monkshood, balloonflower, cockscomb, and chinaroot; each has a time when it is the sovereign remedy, though the individual cases are too numerous to describe.

Goujian, with his three thousand men in armor and shield, took up his position at Kuaiji; at that time, Zhong alone was able to understand how a perishing state can be saved, but he alone did not understand how the body may be brought to grief.[25] Therefore it is said, The owl's eyes have their special aptness, the stork's legs have their proper proportions; to try to cut away anything would make the creatures sad.

It is said, When the wind passes over it, the river loses something; when the sun passes over it, it loses something. But even if we asked the wind and sun to remain constantly over the river, the river would not regard this as the beginning of any real trouble for itself—it relies on the springs that feed it and goes on its way. The water sticks close to the land; the shadow sticks close to the form; things stick close to things. Therefore keen sight may be a danger to the eye; sharp hearing may be a danger to the ear; and the pursuit of thought may be a danger to the mind. All the faculties that are stored up in man are a potential source of danger, and if this danger becomes real and is not averted, misfortunes will go on piling up in increasing number. A return to the original condition takes effort; its accomplishment takes time. And yet men look on these faculties as their treasures—is it not sad? Therefore we have this endless destruction of states and slaughter of the people—because no one knows enough to ask about This![26]

The foot treads a very small area of the ground, but although the area is small, the foot must rely on the support of the untrod ground all around before it can go forward in confidence. The understanding of man is paltry, but although it is paltry, it must rely on all those things that it does not understand before it can understand what is meant by Heaven. To understand the Great Unity, to understand the Great Yin, to understand the Great Eye, to understand the Great Equality, to understand the Great Method, to understand the Great Trust, to understand the Great Serenity—this is perfection. With the Great Unity you may penetrate it;[27] with the Great Yin, unknot it; with the Great Eye, see it; with the Great

Equality, follow it; with the Great Method, embody it; with the Great Trust, reach it; with the Great Serenity, hold it fast.

End with what is Heavenly, follow what is bright, hide in what is pivotal, begin in what is objective—then your comprehension will seem like noncomprehension; your understanding will seem like no understanding; not understanding it, you will later understand it. Your questions about it cannot have a limit, and yet they cannot not have a limit. Vague and slippery, there is yet some reality there. Past and present, it does not alter—nothing can do it injury. We may say that there is one great goal, may we not? Why not inquire about it? Why act in such perplexity? If we use the unperplexed to dispel perplexity and return to unperplexity, this will be the greatest unperplexity.

1. It is proud and self-confident.

2. Probably works on military affairs, though their identity is uncertain.

3. The meaning is doubtful. As Fukunaga points out, the sentence seems to be related to *Daodejing* LXXI.

4. I follow Fukunaga in taking *bian* as a loan for the *bian* that means argument or debate.

5. Great Clod (I take *wei* as standing for *kuai*) here represents the way. The names of the Yellow Emperor's attendants probably have some allegorical significance as well, but their exact meaning is uncertain, and it seems best not to attempt to translate them.

6. I follow Ma Xulun in reading *er* in place of *bu*.

7. The philosophers Mo Di and Yang Zhu appeared on p. 61. Bing is the polite name of the logician Gongsun Long (see p. 135); some scholars take the fourth philosopher to be Song Keng (see p. 291).

8. Winter is dominated by yin, the element of cold and water; summer by yang, the element of heat and fire. But to produce fire, the disciple must have utilized some source of heat, and to produce ice, some source of cold; hence he was merely "using the yang to attract the yang," etc.

9. The point of the story seems to be that although Lu Ju made fun of his disciple for "simply using the yang to attract the yang," his own stunts were confined to the same level; that is, he used sounds to produce sounds. In the same way, the various philosophers debate back and forth, but none ever succeeds in going beyond the level of the relative.

10. It was the custom to employ condemned criminals who had had their feet cut off or maimed as gatekeepers, though not, as in this case, deliberately to maim men for that purpose.

11. This last paragraph is all but unintelligible as it stands. For the most part, I follow Fukunaga's emendations and interpretations. Zhuangzi is warning Huizi that his debates with the other philosophers may actually put him in peril.

12. On Guan Zhong and Duke Huan, see p. 150.

13. Following the version in *Liezi*, sec. 6, I supply a *bu* before the second verb. There are many versions of this anecdote found in early philosophical texts, and this sentence appears in different form in each.

14. Presumably the same as Ziqi of South Wall; see p. 7.

15. Tian He was a high minister of Qi who became its virtual ruler; see p. 69. The people congratulated him because he recognized and paid honor to the sage recluse Ziqi.

16. I follow Xi Tong in taking *xian* as an error for *you*. Ziqi means that by becoming a recluse, he was deliberately courting notoriety and hence was no better than any other seeker of fame.

17. In 479 BCE, the year of Confucius's death, a nobleman of one branch of the royal family of Chu led an uprising. He tried to enlist the support of Xiong Yiliao from south of the Market (see sec. 20, p. 157), first attempting to persuade him, then threatening him at the point of a sword, but Yiliao steadfastly refused. Partly as a result, the revolt quickly failed, and peace was restored among the various branches of the royal family. The juggling of the balls presumably symbolized unconcern in the face of danger. Sunshu Ao, a high minister of Chu who lived a generation before Confucius, governed so effectively that he was able to rest in ease, and the people of the Chu capital, Ying, with no fear of foreign invasion, could lay away their arms; see p. 174. Both men appear here as examples of the superiority of silence over talk. The "beak three feet long" apparently represents the "speech that is not spoken," that is, the state of enlightenment; compare sec. 12, p. 89: "You may join in the cheeping and chirping, and when you have joined in the cheeping and chirping, you may join with Heaven and earth."

18. Following texts that read *zhou* instead of *tong*.

19. As we have seen earlier, men whose feet were maimed were employed as gatekeepers because they couldn't run away.

20. Following Sun Yirang's emendations.

21. Compare sec. 23, p. 190.

22. Reading *xiong* in place of *qin*.

23. The ants and mutton (the text says "sheep," but presumably the word "meat" has dropped out) appeared earlier; on the fishes who "forget one another in the rivers and lakes," see sec. 6, p. 50.

24. As there are times when now one medicine, now another, will be appropriate, so there are times when life is appropriate, times when death is. The remainder of the chapter is rather disconnected in thought, and it is often difficult to make out the author's intent.

25. Goujian, king of Yue, was defeated by the troops of Wu (see p. 5) and forced to flee with a band of followers to the top of Mount Kuaiji. There he plotted revenge with Zhong

and another trusted minister. But later, when he had successfully turned the tables and defeated Wu, he grew suspicious of Zhong and forced him to commit suicide.

26. The Way.

27. The Way.

25

ZEYANG

When Zeyang was traveling in Chu, Yi Jie spoke to the king of Chu about him but gave up and went home without having persuaded the king to grant Zeyang an interview. Zeyang went to see Wang Guo and said, “Sir, I wonder if you would mention me to the king.”[1]

Wang Guo replied, “I would not be as good at that as Gong Yuexiu.”

Zeyang said, “Gong Yuexiu? What does he do?”

“In winter he spears turtles by the river; in summer he loafs around the mountains, and if anyone comes along and asks him about it, he says, ‘This is my house!’ Now since Yi Jie was unable to persuade the king, what could I do?—I am not even a match for Yi Jie. Yi Jie is the kind of man who has understanding, though he lacks real virtue. He is not permissive with himself but puts his whole spirit into pleasing his friends. He has always been dazzled and misled by wealth and eminence—so he is not the kind to help others out with virtue but instead will help them out with harm. A man who is chilled will think spring has come if he piles on enough clothes; a man suffering from the heat will think winter has returned if he finds a cool breeze.[2] Now the king of Chu is the kind of man who is majestic and stern in bearing, and if offended, he is as unforgiving as a tiger. No one but a gross flatterer or a man of the most perfect virtue can hope to talk him into anything.

“The true sage, now—living in hardship, he can make his family forget their poverty; living in affluence, he can make kings and dukes forget their titles and stipends and humble themselves before him. His approach to things is to go along with them and be merry; his approach to men is to take pleasure in the progress of others and to hold on to what is his own. So there may be times when, without saying a word, he induces harmony in others; just standing alongside others, he can cause them to change until the proper relationship between father and son has found its way into every home.[3] He does it all in a spirit of unity and effortlessness—so far is he removed from the hearts of men. This is why I say you should wait for Gong Yuexiu.”

The sage penetrates bafflement and complication, rounding all into a single body, yet he does not know why—it is his inborn nature. He returns to fate and acts accordingly, using Heaven as his teacher, and men follow after, pinning labels on him. But if he worried about how much he knew and his actions were never constant for so much as a year or a season,[4] then how could he ever find a stopping place?

When people are born with good looks, you may hand them a mirror, but if you don't tell them, they will never know that they are better looking than others. Whether they know it or don't know it, whether they are told of it or are not told of it, however, their delightful good looks remain unchanged to the end, and others can go on endlessly admiring them—it is a matter of inborn nature. The sage loves other men, and men accordingly pin labels on him, but if they do not tell him, then he will never know that he loves other men. Whether he knows it or doesn't know it, whether he is told of it or is not told of it, however, his love for men remains unchanged to the end, and others can find endless security in it—it is a matter of in-born nature.

The old homeland, the old city—just to gaze at it from afar is to feel a flush of joy. Even when its hills and mounds are a tangle of weeds and brush, and nine out of ten of the ones you knew have gone to lie under them, still you feel joyful. How much more so, then, when you see those you used to see, when you hear the voices you used to hear—they stand out like eighty-foot towers among the crowd.[5]

Mr. Renxiang held on to the empty socket and followed along to completion.[6] Joining with things, he knew no end, no beginning, no year, no season.[7] And because he changed day by day with things, he was one with the man who never changes—so why should he ever try to stop doing this? He who tries to make Heaven his teacher will never get Heaven to teach him—he will end up following blindly along with all other things, and then no matter how he goes about it, what can he do? The sage has never begun to think of Heaven, has never begun to think of man, has never begun to think of a beginning, has never begun to think of things. He moves in company with the age, never halting; wherever he moves, he finds completion and no impediment. Others try to keep up with him, but what can they do?

Tang got hold of the groom and guardsman Deng Heng and had him be his tutor. He followed him and treated him as a teacher but was not confined by him—so he could follow along to completion, becoming, as a result, a mere holder of titles. This is called making yourself superfluous, a method by which two manifestations can be attained.[8] Confucius's injunction "Be done with schemes!"—you could let that be your tutor as well. Or Mr. Yongcheng's saying, "Be done with days and there will be no more years! No inside, no outside."

King Ying of Wei made a treaty with Marquis Tian Mou of Qi, but Marquis Tian Mou violated it.[9] King Ying, enraged, was about to send a man to assassinate him. Gong-sun Yan, the minister of war, heard of this and was filled with shame. "You are the ruler of a state of ten thousand chariots," he said to the king, "and yet you would send a commoner to carry out your revenge! I beg to be given command of two hundred thousand armored troops so that I may attack him for you, make prisoners of his people, and lead away his horses and cattle. I will make him burn with anger so fierce that it will break out on his

back.[10] Then I will storm his capital, and when Tian Ji[11] tries to run away, I will strike him in the back and break his spine!"

Jizi, hearing this, was filled with shame and said, "If one sets out to build an eighty-foot wall, and then, when it is already seven-tenths finished,[12] deliberately pulls it down, the convict laborers who built it will look upon it as a bitter waste. Now for seven years we have not had to call out the troops, and this peace has been the foundation of your sovereignty. Gongsun Yan is a troublemaker—his advice must not be heeded!"

Huazi, hearing this, was filled with disgust and said, "He who is so quick to say 'Attack Qi!' is a troublemaker, and he who is so quick to say 'Don't attack Qi!' is a troublemaker! And he who says that both those who are for and against the attack are troublemakers is a troublemaker, too!"

"Then what should I do?" said the ruler.

"Just try to find the Way, that's all."

Huizi, hearing this, introduced Dai Jinren to the ruler. Dai Jinren said, "There is a creature called the snail—does Your Majesty know it?"

"Yes."

"On top of its left horn is a kingdom called Buffet, and on top of its right horn is a kingdom called Maul.[13] At times they quarrel over territory and go to war, strewing the field with corpses by the ten thousands, the victor pursuing the vanquished for half a month before returning home."

"Pooh!" said the ruler. "What kind of empty talk is this?"

"But Your Majesty will perhaps allow me to show you the truth in it. Do you believe that there is a limit to the four directions, to up and down?"

"They have no limits," said the ruler.

"And do you know that when the mind has wandered in these limitless reaches and returns to the lands we know and travel, they seem so small that it is not certain whether or not they even exist?"

"Yes," said the ruler.

"And among these lands we know and travel is the state of Wei, and within the state of Wei is the city of Liang, and within the city of Liang is Your Majesty. Is there any difference between you and the ruler of Maul?"

"No difference," said the king.

After the visitor left, the king sat stupefied, as though lost to the world. The interview over, Huizi appeared before him. "That visitor of ours is a Great Man," said the king.

"The sages themselves are unworthy of comparison with him!" Huizi said, "Blow on a flute, and you get a nice shrill note; but blow on the ring of your sword hilt, and all you get is a feeble wheeze. People are inclined to praise the sages Yao and Shun, but if you started expounding on Yao and Shun in the presence of Dai Jinren, it would sound like one little wheeze!"

When Confucius was traveling to the capital of Chu, he stopped for the night at a tavern at Ant Knoll. Next door a crowd of husbands and wives, menservants and maid-servants, had

climbed up to the rooftop [to watch].[14] Zilu said, “Who are all those people milling around?”

“They are the servants of a sage,” said Confucius. “He has buried himself among the people, hidden himself among the fields. His reputation fades away, but his determination knows no end. Though his mouth speaks, his mind has never spoken. Perhaps he finds himself at odds with the age and, in his heart, disdains to go along with it. He is one who has ‘drowned in the midst of dry land.’ I would guess that it is Yiliao from south of the Market.”[15]

“May I go next door and call him over?” asked Zilu.

“Let it be!” said Confucius. “He knows that I am out to make a name for myself, and he knows I am on my way to the capital of Chu. He is sure to assume that I am trying to get the king of Chu to give me a position and will accordingly take me for a sycophant. A man like that is ashamed even to hear the words of a sycophant, much less appear in person before him! What makes you think he is still at home, anyway?”

Zilu went next door to have a look and found the house deserted.

The border guard of Zhangwu said to Zilao,[16] “In running the government, you mustn’t be slipshod; in ordering the people, you mustn’t be slapdash! In the past, I used to grow grain. I plowed in a slipshod way and got a slipshod crop in return. I weeded in a slapdash way and got a slap-dash crop in return. The following year, I changed my methods, plowing deeper than before and raking with great care—the grain grew thick and luxuriant, and I had all I wanted to eat for the whole year!”

Zhuangzi, hearing of this, said, “People of today, when they come to ordering their bodies and regulating their minds, too, often do it in a manner like that which the border guard described. They turn their backs on the Heavenly part, deviate from the inborn nature, destroy the true form, and annihilate the spirit, just to be doing what the crowd is doing. So he who is slipshod with his inborn nature will find the evils of desire and hate affecting his inborn nature like weeds and rushes. When they first sprout up, he thinks they will be a comfort to the body, but in time they end by stifling the inborn nature. Side by side, they begin to break out and ooze forth, not on just one part of the body, but all over. Festering ulcers and boils, internal fevers and pus-filled urine—these are the results!”

Bo Ju, having studied under Lao Dan, said, “I would like permission to go wandering about the world.”

“Let it be!” said Lao Dan. “The world is right here.”

When Bo Ju repeated his request, Lao Dan said, “Where will you go first?”

“I will begin with Qi.” When he arrived in Qi, he saw the body of a criminal who had been executed.[17] Pushing and dragging until he had it laid out in proper position, he took off his formal robes and covered it with them, wailing to Heaven and crying out, “Alas, alas! The world is in dire misfortune, and you have been quicker than the rest of us to encounter it. ‘Thou shalt not steal; thou shalt not murder!’ they say. But when glory and disgrace have once been defined, you will see suffering; when goods and wealth have once

been gathered together, you will see wrangling. To define something that brings suffering to men, to gather together what sets them to wrangling, inflicting misery and weariness on them, never granting them a time of rest, and yet to hope somehow that they will not end up like this—how could it be possible?

"The gentlemen of old attributed what success they had to the people and what failure they had to themselves, attributed what was upright to the people and what was askew to themselves. Therefore, if there was something wrong with the body of even a single being, they would retire and take the blame themselves. But that is not the way it is done today. They make things obscure and then blame people for not understanding;[18] they enlarge the difficulties and then punish people for not being able to cope with them; they pile on responsibilities and then penalize people for not being able to fulfill them; they make the journey longer and then chastise people for not reaching the end of it. When the knowledge and strength of the people are exhausted, they will begin to piece them out with artifice; and when day by day the amount of artifice in the world increases, how can men keep from resorting to artifice? A lack of strength invites artifice; a lack of knowledge invites deceit; a lack of goods invites theft. But these thefts and robberies—who in fact deserves the blame for them?"

* * *

Qu Boyu has been going along for sixty years and has changed sixty times. There was not a single instance in which what he called right in the beginning he did not, in the end, reject and call wrong. So now there's no telling whether what he calls right at the moment is not, in fact, what he called wrong during the past fifty-nine years. The ten thousand things have their life, yet no one sees its roots; they have their comings forth, yet no one sees the gate. Men all pay homage to what understanding understands, but no one understands enough to rely on what understanding does not understand and thereby come to understand. Can we call this anything but great perplexity? Let it be, let it be! There is no place you can escape it. This is what is called saying both "that is so" and "is that so?"[19]

Confucius said to the Grand Historiographers Da Tao, Bo Changqian, and Xi Wei, "Duke Ling of Wei drank wine and wallowed in pleasure, paying no heed to the government of the state; he went hunting and gaming with nets and stringed arrows, ignoring his obligations to the other feudal lords. How then does he come to be called Duke Ling?"[20]

Da Tao said, "It fitted the facts."

Bo Changqian said, "Duke Ling had three wives with whom he would bathe in the same tub. But when Shi Qiu appeared in his presence to offer a gift of cloth, the duke would accept it in person and respectfully attend Shi Qiu.[21] He was so depraved as to bathe with his wives and yet so correct in his behavior before a worthy man—this is why he was titled Duke Ling."

Xi Wei said, "When Duke Ling died, we divined to see if he should be buried in the family graveyard, but the omens were unfavorable. Then we divined to see if he should be buried at Sand Hill, and the omens were favorable. Digging down several fathoms, we

found a stone coffin, and when we had washed and examined it, we discovered an inscription that said: 'You cannot depend on your heirs—Duke Ling will seize this plot for his own burial.'[22] So it appears that Duke Ling had already been titled Ling for a long long time. How could these two here know enough to understand this!"

Little Understanding said to Great Impartial Accord, "What is meant by the term 'community words'?"

Great Impartial Accord said, "'Community words' refers to the combining of ten surnames and a hundred given names into a single social unit.[23] Differences are combined into a sameness; samenesses are broken up into differences. Now we may point to each of the hundred parts of a horse's body and never come up with a 'horse'—yet here is the horse, tethered right before our eyes. So we take the hundred parts and set up the term 'horse.' Thus it is that hills and mountains pile up one little layer on another to reach loftiness; the Yangtze and the Yellow River combine stream after stream to achieve magnitude; and the Great Man combines and brings together things to attain generality.[24] Therefore, when things enter his mind from the outside, there is a host to receive them but not to cling to them; and when things come forth from his mind, there is a mark to guide them but not to constrain them.[25] The four seasons each differ in breath, but Heaven shows no partiality[26] among them, and therefore the year comes to completion. The five government bureaus differ in function, but the ruler shows no partiality among them, and therefore the state is well ordered. In both civil and military affairs, the Great Man shows no partiality, and therefore his virtue is complete.[27] The ten thousand things differ in principle, but the Way shows no partiality among them, and therefore they may achieve namelessness.[28] Being nameless, they are without action; without action, yet there is nothing they do not do.

"The seasons have their end and beginning, the ages their changes and transformations. Bad fortune and good, tripping and tumbling, come now with what repels you, now with what you welcome. Set in your own opinion, at odds with others, now you judge things to be upright, now you judge them to be warped. But if you could only be like the great swamp, which finds accommodation for a hundred different timbers, or take your model from the great mountain, whose trees and rocks share a common groundwork! This is what is meant by the term 'community words.'"

Little Understanding said, "Well, then, if we call these [general concepts] the Way, will that be sufficient?"

"Oh, no," said Great Impartial Accord. "If we calculate the number of things that exist, the count certainly does not stop at ten thousand. Yet we set a limit and speak of the 'ten thousand things'—because we select a number that is large and agree to apply it to them. In the same way, heaven and earth are forms that are large, the yin and yang are breaths that are large, and the Way is the generality that embraces them. If from the point of view of largeness we agree to apply [the name 'Way'] to it, then there will be no objection. But

if, having established this name, we go on and try to compare it to the reality, then it will be like trying to compare a dog to a horse—the distance between them is impossibly far."[29]

Little Understanding said, "Here within the four directions and the six realms, where do the ten thousand things spring from when they come into being?"

Great Impartial Accord said, "The yin and yang shine on each other, maim each other, heal each other; the four seasons succeed each other, give birth to each other, slaughter each other. Desire and hatred, rejection and acceptance, thereupon rise up in succession;[30] the pairing of halves between male and female thereupon becomes a regular occurrence. Security and danger trade places with each other; bad and good fortune give birth to each other; tense times and relaxed ones buffet each other; gathering together and scattering bring it all to completion. These names and realities can be recorded; their details and minute parts can be noted. The principle of following one another in orderly succession, the property of moving in alternation, turning back when they have reached the limit, beginning again when they have ended—these are inherent in things. But that which words can adequately describe, that which understanding can reach to, extends only as far as the level of 'things,' no further. The man who looks to the Way does not try to track down what has disappeared, does not try to trace the source of what springs up. This is the point at which debate comes to a stop."

Little Understanding said, "Ji Zhen's contention that 'nothing does it' and Jiezi's contention that 'something makes it like this'—of the views of these two schools, which correctly describes the truth of the matter, and which is one sided in its understanding of principles?"[31]

Great Impartial Accord said, "Chickens squawk, dogs bark—this is something men understand. But no matter how great their understanding, they cannot explain in words how the chicken and the dog have come to be what they are, nor can they imagine in their minds what they will become in the future. You may pick apart and analyze till you have reached what is so minute that it is without form, what is so large that it cannot be encompassed. But whether you say that 'nothing does it' or that 'something makes it like this,' you have not yet escaped from the realm of 'things,' and so in the end you fall into error. If 'something makes it like this,' then it is real; if 'nothing does it,' then it is unreal. When there are names and realities, you are in the presence of things. When there are no names and realities, you exist in the absence of things.[32] You can talk about it, you can think about it; but the more you talk about it, the further away you get from it.

"Before they are born, things cannot decline to be born; already dead, they cannot refuse to go. Death and life are not far apart, though the principle that underlies them cannot be seen. 'Nothing does it,' 'something makes it like this'—these are speculations born out of doubt. I look for the roots of the past, but they extend back and back without end. I search for the termination of the future, but it never stops coming at me. Without end, without stop, it is the absence of words, which shares the same principle with things themselves. But 'nothing does it,' 'something makes it like this'—these are the commencement of words, and they begin and end along with things.

"The Way cannot be thought of as being, nor can it be thought of as nonbeing. In calling it the Way, we are only adopting a temporary expedient. 'Nothing does it,' 'something makes it like this'—these occupy a mere corner of the realm of things. What connection could they have with the Great Method? If you talk in a worthy manner, you can talk all day long, and all of it will pertain to the Way. But if you talk in an unworthy manner, you can talk all day long, and all of it will pertain to mere things. The perfection of the Way and things—neither words nor silence is worthy of expressing it. Not to talk, not to be silent—this is the highest form of debate."

1. Zeyang or Peng Yang (the name appears both ways in the passage) is vaguely identified as a native of Lu. In hopes of official appointment, he is obviously seeking an introduction to the king of Chu through various courtiers.

2. I fail to see how this saying, if I understand it correctly, is meant to apply to the context.

3. The latter part of the sentence is unintelligible in the original, and the translation is no more than a guess.

4. I follow Ma Xulun in the interpretation of *qi*; the sentence is vague, and there are many other interpretations.

5. Any number of different translations could be made of this haunting and troublesome paragraph, all as tentative as the one I offer here. It has traditionally been interpreted to express the joy a person experiences when he returns to his inborn nature.

6. Compare sec. 2, p. 10: "When the hinge is fitted into the socket, it can respond endlessly." Mr. Renxiang is vaguely identified as an ancient sage ruler.

7. I take *qi* as in the earlier passage; see n. 4.

8. Compare sec. 2, p. 11: "This is called walking two roads." It would seem that Tang turned over the actual affairs of government to Deng Heng and retained only the title of ruler for himself. But this whole passage is barely intelligible, and there are many interpretations.

9. There is some doubt about the names and identity of these noblemen.

10. Men who develop ulcers on their back as a result of intense anger and frustration are mentioned in other early Chinese texts.

11. The commander of the Qi army.

12. Following Yu Yue, I read *qi* in place of *shi*.

13. I borrow these translations of the names with gratitude from Waley (*Three Ways of Thought*, p. 64).

14. The text says only that they had climbed to the roof (if that is, in fact, the meaning of *dengji*). Commentators disagree as to why they were there, but it seems most natural to

suppose that they had gathered to gawk at Confucius, the pseudo sage, unaware that they were actually in the employ of a real sage.

15. See sec. 20, p. 157, and sec. 24, p. 208.

16. A disciple of Confucius.

17. Bodies of executed criminals were exposed in the marketplace.

18. Following Yu Yue, I read *guo* in place of *yu*, but perhaps the phrase should be further emended.

19. Compare sec. 2, p. 17, "If so were really so," etc.

20. Ling was the posthumous title bestowed on him by the court historiographers, whose duty it was to choose a title that was appropriate to the life and moral qualities of the deceased ruler. Ling may have either good or bad connotations, depending on how one interprets it. In what follows, it is apparent that Confucius is taking it in a good sense, Da Tao in a bad one, and Bo Changqian in both senses.

21. This is Fukunaga's guess as to what this impenetrable sentence means; he emends *suo* to *er*.

22. Following texts that read *mai* in place of *li*.

23. That is, "community words" are general terms or concepts that subsume a number of differing particulars. This section in parts resembles the discussion of semantics in sec. 17, pp. 129–131, and in *Xunzi*, sec. 22.

24. *Gong*, "common," "public," "generally accepted"; translated earlier as "impartial" in order to bring out the contract with "partiality."

25. Compare the similar passage in sec. 14, p. 114.

26. Following Ma Xulun's emendation. The word "breath" refers to the prevailing wind, temperature, and other weather phenomena associated with each season.

27. This sentence does not fit into the parallelism and is probably defective.

28. That is, can become one with the nameless Way.

29. That is, whatever name we agree to use in designating the Way, we must not suppose that it can in any sense adequately describe or convey an idea of the Way itself.

30. Following Wang Yun's interpretation.

31. Ji Zhen and Jiezi are philosophers of whom little is known. As we see here, the latter taught the existence of some prime mover or governor of the universe, while the former denied it.

32. Are these two sentences meant to express a contrast between the relativistic and the absolute viewpoints, or to be two statements of the relativistic viewpoint? I am unable to

decide.

26

EXTERNAL THINGS

External things cannot be counted on. Hence Longfeng was executed, Bi Gan was sentenced to death, Prince Ji feigned madness, E Lai was killed, and Jie and Zhou were overthrown.[1] There is no ruler who does not want his ministers to be loyal. But loyal ministers are not always trusted. Hence Wu Yun was thrown into the Yangzi, and Chang Hong died in Shu, where the people stored away his blood, and after three years it was transformed into green jade.[2] There is no parent who does not want his son to be filial. But filial sons are not always loved. Hence Xiaoji grieved, and Zeng Shen sorrowed.[3]

When wood rubs against wood, flames spring up. When metal remains by the side of fire, it melts and flows away. When the yin and yang go awry, then heaven and earth see astounding sights. Then we hear the crash and roll of thunder, and fire comes in the midst of rain and burns up the great pagoda tree. Delight and sorrow are there to trap man on either side so that he has no escape. Fearful and trembling, he can reach no completion. His mind is as though trussed and suspended between heaven and earth, bewildered and lost in delusion. Profit and loss rub against each other and light the countless fires that burn up the inner harmony of the mass of men. The moon cannot put out the fire, so that in time, all is consumed, and the Way comes to an end.[4]

Zhuang Zhou's family was very poor, and so he went to borrow some grain from the marquis of Jianhe. The marquis said, "Why, of course. I'll soon be getting the tribute money from my fief, and when I do, I'll be glad to lend you three hundred pieces of gold. Will that be all right?"

Zhuang Zhou flushed with anger and said, "As I was coming here yesterday, I heard someone calling me on the road. I turned around and saw that there was a perch in the carriage rut. I said to him, 'Come, perch—what are you doing here?' He replied, 'I am a Wave Official of the Eastern Sea. Couldn't you give me a dipperful of water so I can stay alive?' I said to him, 'Why, of course. I'm just about to start south to visit the kings of Wu and Yue. I'll change the course of the West River and send it in your direction. Will that be all right?' The perch flushed with anger and said, 'I've lost my element! I have nowhere to go! If you can get me a dipper of water, I'll be able to stay alive. But if you give me an answer like that, then you'd best look for me in the dried fish store!'"

Prince Ren made an enormous fishhook with a huge line, baited it with fifty bullocks, settled himself on top of Mount Kuaiji, and cast with his pole into the eastern sea. Morning after morning, he dropped the hook, but for a whole year he got nothing. At last a huge fish swallowed the bait and dived down, dragging the enormous hook. It plunged to the bottom in a fierce charge, rose up and shook its dorsal fins until the white waves were like mountains and the sea waters lashed and churned. The noise was like that of gods and demons, and it spread terror for a thousand *li*. When Prince Ren had landed his fish, he cut it up and dried it, and from Zhihe east, from Cangwu north, there was no one who did not get his fill. Since then, the men of later generations who have piddling talents and a penchant for odd stories all astound one another by repeating the tale.

Now if you shoulder your pole and line, march to the ditches and gullies, and watch for minnows and perch, then you'll have a hard time ever landing a big fish. If you parade your little theories and fish for the post of district magistrate, you will be far from the Great Understanding. So if a man has never heard of the style of Prince Ren, he's a long way from being able to join with the men who run the world.

The Confucians rob graves in accordance with the *Odes* and ritual. The big Confucian announces to his underlings: "The east grows light! How is the matter proceeding?"

The little Confucians say: "We haven't got the grave clothes off him yet, but there's a pearl in his mouth![5] Just as the *Ode* says:

> Green, green the grain
> Growing on grave mound slopes;
> If in life you gave no alms
> In death how do you deserve a pearl?"

They push back his sidelocks, press down his beard, and then one of them pries into his chin with a little metal gimlet and gently pulls apart the jaws so as not to injure the pearl in his mouth.

A disciple of Lao Laizi[6] was out gathering firewood when he happened to meet Confucius. He returned and reported, "There's a man over there with a long body and short legs, his back a little humped and his ears set way back, who looks as though he were trying to attend to everything within the four seas. I don't know who it can be."

Lao Laizi said, "That's Kong Qiu. Tell him to come over here!"

When Confucius arrived, Lao Laizi said, "Qiu, get rid of your proud bearing and that knowing look on your face, and you can become a gentleman!"

Confucius bowed and stepped back a little, a startled and changed expression on his face, and then asked, "Do you think I can make any progress in my labors?"

Lao Laizi said, "You can't bear to watch the sufferings of one age, and so you go and make trouble for ten thousand ages to come![7] Are you just naturally a boor? Or don't you have the sense to understand the situation? You take pride in practicing charity and making people happy[8]—the shame of it will follow you all your days! These are the actions, the

‘progress’ of mediocre men—men who pull one another around with fame, drag one another into secret schemes, join together to praise Yao and condemn Jie, when the best thing would be to forget them both and put a stop to praise! What is contrary cannot fail to be injured; what moves [when it shouldn’t] cannot fail to be wrong. The sage is hesitant and reluctant to begin an affair, and so he always ends in success. But what good are these actions of yours? They end in nothing but a boast!”[9]

Lord Yuan of Song one night dreamed he saw a man with disheveled hair who peered in at the side door of his chamber and said, “I come from the Zailu Deeps. I was on my way as envoy from the Clear Yangzi to the court of the Lord of the Yellow River when a fisherman named Yu Ju caught me!”

When Lord Yuan woke up, he ordered his men to divine the meaning, and they replied, “This is a sacred turtle.” “Is there a fisherman named Yu Ju?” he asked, and his attendants replied, “There is.” “Order Yu Ju to come to court!” he said.

The next day Yu Ju appeared at court, and the ruler said, “What kind of fish have you caught recently?”

Yu Ju replied, “I caught a white turtle in my net. It’s five feet around.”

“Present your turtle!” ordered the ruler. When the turtle was brought, the ruler could not decide whether to kill it or let it live, and being in doubt, he consulted his diviners, who replied, “Kill the turtle and divine with it—it will bring good luck.” Accordingly the turtle was stripped of its shell, and of seventy-two holes drilled in it for prognostication, not one failed to yield a true answer.[10]

Confucius said, “The sacred turtle could appear to Lord Yuan in a dream, but it couldn’t escape from Yu Ju’s net. It knew enough to give correct answers to seventy-two queries, but it couldn’t escape the disaster of having its belly ripped open. So it is that knowledge has its limitations, and the sacred has that which it can do nothing about. Even the most perfect wisdom can be outwitted by ten thousand schemers. Fish do not [know enough to] fear a net but only to fear pelicans. Discard little wisdom, and great wisdom will become clear. Discard goodness, and goodness will come of itself. The little child learns to speak, though it has no learned teachers—because it lives with those who know how to speak.”

Huizi said to Zhuangzi, “Your words are useless!”

Zhuangzi said, “A man has to understand the useless before you can talk to him about the useful. The earth is certainly vast and broad, though a man uses no more of it than the area he puts his feet on. If, however, you were to dig away all the earth from around his feet until you reached the Yellow Springs,[11] then would the man still be able to make use of it?”

“No, it would be useless,” said Huizi.

“It is obvious, then,” said Zhuangzi, “that the useless has its use.”

Zhuangzi said, “If you have the capacity to wander, how can you keep from wandering? But if you do not have the capacity to wander, how can you wander? A will that takes refuge in conformity, behavior that is aloof and eccentric—neither of these, alas, is

compatible with perfect wisdom and solid virtue. You stumble and fall but fail to turn back; you race on like fire and do not look behind you. But though you may be one time a ruler, another time a subject, this is merely a matter of the times. Such distinctions change with the age, and you cannot call either one or the other lowly. Therefore I say, the Perfect Man is never a stickler in his actions.

"To admire antiquity and despise the present—this is the fashion of scholars. And if one is to look at the present age after the fashion of Xiwei, then who can be without prejudice?[12] Only the Perfect Man can wander in the world without taking sides, can follow along with men without losing himself. His teachings are not to be learned, and one who understands his meaning has no need for him.[13]

"The eye that is penetrating sees clearly, the ear that is penetrating hears clearly, the nose that is penetrating distinguishes odors, the mouth that is penetrating distinguishes flavors, the mind that is penetrating has understanding, and the understanding that is penetrating has virtue. In all things, the Way does not want to be obstructed, for if there is obstruction, there is choking; if the choking does not cease, there is disorder; and disorder harms the life of all creatures.

"All things that have consciousness depend on breath. But if they do not get their fill of breath, it is not the fault of Heaven. Heaven opens up the passages and supplies them day and night without stop. But man, on the contrary, blocks up the holes. The cavity of the body is a many-storied vault; the mind has its Heavenly wanderings. But if the chambers are not large and roomy, then the wife and mother-in-law will fall to quarreling. If the mind does not have its Heavenly wanderings, then the six apertures of sensation will defeat one another.

"The great forests, the hills and mountains, excel man in the fact that their growth is irrepressible. [In man,] virtue spills over into a concern for fame, and a concern for fame spills over into a love of show. Schemes are laid in time of crisis; wisdom is born from contention; obstinacy comes from sticking to a position; government affairs are arranged for the convenience of the mob.[14] In spring, when the seasonable rains and sunshine come, the grass and trees spring to life, and the sickles and hoes are, for the first time, prepared for use. At that time, more than half the grass and trees that had been pushed over begin to grow again, though no one knows why.[15]

"Stillness and silence can benefit the ailing, massage can give relief to the aged, and rest and quiet can put a stop to agitation. But these are remedies that the troubled and weary man has recourse to. The man who is at ease does not need them and has never bothered to ask about them. The Holy Man does not bother to ask what methods the sage uses to reform the world. The sage does not bother to ask what methods the worthy man uses to reform the age. The worthy man does not bother to ask what methods the gentleman uses to reform the state. The gentleman does not bother to ask what methods the petty man uses to get along with the times.

"There was a man of Yan Gate who, on the death of his parents, won praise by starving and disfiguring himself and was rewarded with the post of Official Teacher. The other people of the village likewise starved and disfigured themselves, and more than half of

them died. Yao offered the empire to Xu You, and Xu You fled from him. Tang offered it to Wu Guang, and Wu Guang railed at him. When Ji Tuo heard of this, he took his disciples and went off to sit by the Kuan River, where the feudal lords went to console him for three years. Shentu Di, for the same reason, jumped into the Yellow River.[16]

"The fish trap exists because of the fish; once you've gotten the fish, you can forget the trap. The rabbit snare exists because of the rabbit; once you've gotten the rabbit, you can forget the snare. Words exist because of meaning; once you've gotten the meaning, you can forget the words. Where can I find a man who has forgotten words so I can have a word with him?"

1. Guan Longfeng, minister to the tyrant Jie, and Prince Bi Gan, minister to the tyrant Zhou, appeared on p. 23. Prince Ji was a relative of Zhou who had to feign madness in order to escape execution. E Lai assisted Zhou and was put to death when Zhou was overthrown.

2. Wu Yun, or Wu Zixu, the loyal minister of Wu, appeared on p. 140. He was forced by the king to commit suicide, and his body was thrown into the Yangzi. Chang Hong is mentioned in the *Zuozhuan* as a minister of the Zhou court who was killed in 492 BCE. But if this is the same man, the story of his exile and suicide in Shu and the miraculous transformation of his blood must come from later legend.

3. Xiaoji was the eminently filial son of King Wuding of the Shang; he was said to have been persecuted by an evil stepmother. Zeng Shen, a disciple of Confucius and likewise a paragon of filial piety, was despised by his father.

4. This paragraph presents numerous difficulties of interpretation, and the translation is tentative at many points. In places the language appears to be that of ancient Chinese medicine, with its theories of the influences of the yin and yang acting within the body. Thus the moon may represent the watery force of the yin, or perhaps the cold light of the mind.

5. The pearl or other precious stone customarily placed in the mouth of the corpse at burial.

6. A Daoist sage and reputed author of a work in sixteen sections that is no longer extant. He is sometimes identified with Laozi.

7. Following texts that read *wu* in place of *ao*.

8. The meaning is very doubtful.

9. This last speech of Lao Laizi presents numerous difficulties, and the translation is tentative.

10. Small indentations were drilled in the carapace, and heat was applied: divination was based on the shape of the cracks that resulted.

11. See p. 136, n. 17.

12. Xiwei, identified as a mythical ruler of high antiquity, appeared on p. 45, as the sage who "held up heaven and earth." The Confucians and Mohists are the most notorious extollers of antiquity, but the same tendency is discernible at times in the Daoist school, for example, in Laozi's description of the ideal simplicity and primitiveness of the society of very ancient times. I suspect that "the fashion of Xiwei" is a reference to these advocates of ancient simplicity in the Daoist school, though our understanding of the passage is greatly hampered by the fact that we know almost nothing about the Xiwei legend. As this passage makes clear, Zhuangzi's ideal "wandering"—that is, living in accordance with the Way—does not permit either a forced conformity with the world or a forced withdrawal from, and denial of, the world.

13. The second part of the sentence is obscure in the original.

14. I take fame, show, schemes, wisdom, and the arranging of government affairs for the convenience of the mob to be "unnatural" and undesirable aims and activities that interfere with man's growth.

15. This whole paragraph, and especially the last sentence, is very difficult to interpret, and there is no agreement among commentators as to the exact meaning.

16. Xu You, the recluse who refused Yao's throne, appeared on p. 3. A similar story is told about King Tang and the recluse Wu Guang. Ji Tuo and Shentu Di, along with Wu Guang, were mentioned on p. 43, but we know nothing of their stories. Apparently they withdrew or committed suicide out of sympathy for the insult that had been done to Wu Guang in offering him a throne.

27

IMPUTED WORDS

Imputed words make up nine-tenths of it; repeated words make up seven-tenths of it; goblet words come forth day after day, harmonizing things in the Heavenly Equality.[1]

These imputed words that make up nine-tenths of it are like persons brought in from outside for the purpose of exposition. A father does not act as go-between for his own son because the praises of the father would not be as effective as the praises of an outsider. It is the fault of other men, not mine, [that I must resort to such a device, for if I were to speak in my own words], then men would respond only to what agrees with their own views and reject what does not, would pronounce "right" what agrees with their own views and "wrong" what does not.

These repeated words that make up seven-tenths of it are intended to put an end to argument. They can do this because they are the words of the elders. If, however, one is ahead of others in age but does not have a grasp of the warp and woof, the root and branch of things, that is commensurate with his years, then he is not really ahead of others. An old man who is not in some way ahead of others has not grasped the Way of man, and if he has not grasped the Way of man, he deserves to be looked on as a mere stale remnant of the past.

With these goblet words that come forth day after day, I harmonize all things in the Heavenly Equality, leave them to their endless changes, and so live out my years. As long as I do not say anything about them, they are a unity. But the unity and what I say about it have ceased to be a unity; what I say and the unity have ceased to be a unity.[2] Therefore I say, we must have no-words! With words that are no-words, you may speak all your life long, and you will never have said anything. Or you may go through your whole life *without* speaking them, in which case you will never have stopped speaking.

There is that which makes things acceptable; there is that which makes things unacceptable; there is that which makes things so; there is that which makes things not so. What makes them so? Making them so makes them so. What makes them not so? Making them not so makes them not so. What makes them acceptable? Making them acceptable makes them acceptable. What makes them not acceptable? Making them not acceptable makes them not acceptable. Things all must have that which is so; things all must have that which is acceptable. There is nothing that is not so, nothing that is not acceptable.[3] If there were no goblet words coming forth day after day to harmonize all by the Heavenly Equality, then how could I survive for long?

The ten thousand things all come from the same seed, and with their different forms they give place to one another. Beginning and end are part of a single ring, and no one can comprehend its principle. This is called Heaven the Equalizer, which is the same as the Heavenly Equality.

Zhuangzi said to Huizi, "Confucius has been going along for sixty years, and he has changed sixty times. What at the beginning he used to call right he has ended up calling wrong. So now there's no telling whether what he calls right at the moment is not, in fact, what he called wrong during the past fifty-nine years."[4]

Huizi said, "Confucius keeps working away at it, trying to make knowledge serve him."

"Oh, no—Confucius has given all that up," said Zhuangzi. "It's just that he never talks about it. Confucius said, 'We receive our talents from the Great Source, and with the spirit hidden within us,[5] we live.' [As for you, you] sing on key, you talk by the rules, you line up 'profit' and 'righteousness' before us, but your 'likes' and 'dislikes,' your 'rights' and 'wrongs,' are merely something that command lip service from others, that's all. If you could make men pay service with their minds and never dare stand up in defiance—this would settle things for the world so they would stay settled. But let it be, let it be! As for me, what hope have I of ever catching up with Confucius?"

Zengzi twice held office, each time with a change of heart.[6] "The first time, when I was taking care of my parents, I received a salary of only three *fu* of grain, and yet my heart was happy," he said. "The second time I received a salary of three thousand *zhong*, but I no longer had them to take care of, and my heart was sad."

One of the disciples asked Confucius, "May we say that someone like Zeng Shen has escaped the crime of entanglement?"

"But he was already entangled! If he hadn't been entangled, how could he have had any cause for sorrow? He would have regarded three *fu* or three thousand *zhong* as so many sparrows or mosquitoes passing in front of him!"

Yan Cheng Ziyou said to Ziqi of East Wall, "When I began listening to your words, the first year I was a bumpkin; the second I followed along; the third I worked into it; the fourth I was just another thing; the fifth it began to come; the sixth the spirits descended to me; the seventh the Heavenly part was complete; the eighth I didn't understand death and didn't understand life; and with the ninth I reached the Great Mystery.

"When the living start doing things, they are dead. When they strive for public causes because private ones mean death, they are following a path. But what lives in the light is following no path at all.[7] What is the result then? How can there be any place that is fitting? How can there be any place that isn't fitting? Heaven has its cycles and numbers, earth its flats and slopes[8]—yet why should I seek to comprehend them? No one knows when they will end—how then can we say that they are fated to die? No one knows when they began—how then can we say that they are not fated to die? There seems to be

something that responds—how then can we say there are no spirits? There seems to be something that does not respond—how then can we say that spirits do exist?"

Penumbra said to Shadow, "A little while ago you were looking down, and now you're looking up; a little while ago your hair was bound up, and now it's hanging loose; a little while ago you were sitting, and now you're standing up; a little while ago you were walking, and now you're still—why is this?"

Shadow said, "Quibble, quibble! Why bother asking about such things? I do them, but I don't know why. I'm the shell of the cicada, the skin of the snake—something that seems to be but isn't. In firelight or sunlight, I draw together; in darkness or night, I disappear. But do you suppose I have to wait around for those things? (And how much less so in the case of that which waits for nothing!) If those things come, then I come with them; if they go, then I go with them; if they come with the Powerful Yang, then I come with the Powerful Yang. But this Powerful Yang—why ask questions about it?"[9]

Yang Ziju went south to Pei, and when he got to Liang, he went out to the edge of the city to greet Lao Dan, who had been traveling west to Qin, and escort him in. Laozi stood in the middle of the road, looked up to heaven, and sighed, saying, "At first I thought that you could be taught, but now I see it's hopeless!"

Yang Ziju made no reply, but when they reached the inn, he fetched a basin of water, a towel, and a comb and, taking off his shoes outside the door of the room, came crawling forward on his knees and said, "Earlier I had hoped to ask you, sir, what you meant by your remark, but I saw that you were occupied and didn't dare. Now that you have a free moment, may I ask where my fault lies?"

Laozi said, "High and mighty, proud and haughty—who could stand to live with you![10] The greatest purity looks like shame; abundant virtue seems to be insufficient."[11]

When Yang Ziju first arrived at the inn, the people in the inn came out to greet him. The innkeeper stood ready with a mat, his wife with towel and comb, while the other guests moved politely off their mats, and those who had been warming themselves at the stove stepped aside. But when Yang returned from his interview with Laozi, the people at the inn tried to push him right off his own mat.[12]

1. See p. 17. The passage that follows describes three literary devises used in the *Zhuangzi* as a whole: (1) *yuyan*, "imputed words," words put into the mouth of historical or fictional persons to make them more compelling; (2) *chongyan*, "repeated words" (another interpretation would make it *zhongyan* or "weighty words"), words of the wise old men of the past that are "repeated" or quoted to give authority to the argument; and (3) *zhiyan*, "goblet words," words that are like a goblet that tips when full and rights itself when empty, that is, that adapt to and follow along with the fluctuating nature of the world and thus achieve a state of harmony.

2. Compare sec. 2, p. 12, but it seems odd that the two clauses should repeat the same idea.

3. Compare sec. 2, p. 10.

4. The same remark was made on p. 222 in reference to Qu Boyu.

5. Following Zhang Binglin's interpretation.

6. Zeng Shen, the paragon of filial piety, appeared earlier; see esp. sec. 26, p. 227.

7. Literally, "what lives in the yang"; compare sec. 2, p. 8. "And when their minds draw near to death, nothing can restore them to the light."

8. Following Zhang Binglin's interpretation.

9. The term "Powerful Yang" appeared in sec. 22, p. 180; the yang is the element of fire and hence is the essence of the firelight and sunlight mentioned earlier. This whole section is a reworking of the passage in sec. 2, p. 18.

10. According to another interpretation, these four adjectives are descriptions of good qualities, that is, of what Laozi wants Yang to become. Fukunaga takes them as synonymous with those in sec. 7, p. 55, translated as "peaceful and easy, wide-eyed, and blank."

11. Almost identical with a passage in *Daodejing* XLI.

12. Because he has ceased to look and act like a man of any importance, that is, had become a true follower of the Way.

28

GIVING AWAY A THRONE

Yao wanted to cede the empire to Xu You, but Xu You refused to accept it.[1] Then he tried to give it to Zichou Zhifu. Zichou Zhifu said, “Make me the Son of Heaven?—that would be all right, I suppose. But I happen to have a deep-seated and worrisome illness that I am just now trying to put in order. So I have no time to put the empire in order.” The empire is a thing of supreme importance, yet he would not allow it to harm his life. How much less, then, any other thing! Only he who has no use for the empire is fit to be entrusted with it.

Shun wanted to cede the empire to Zizhou Zhibo, but Zizhou Zhibo said, “I happen to have a deep-seated and worrisome illness that I am just now trying to put in order. So I have no time to put the empire in order.” The empire is a great vessel, yet he would not exchange his life for it. This is how the possessor of the Way differs from the vulgar man.

Shun tried to cede the empire to Shan Quan, but Shan Quan said, “I stand in the midst of space and time. Winter days, I dress in skins and furs; summer days, in vine cloth and hemp. In spring, I plow and plant—this gives my body the labor and exercise it needs; in fall, I harvest and store away—this gives my form the leisure and sustenance it needs. When the sun comes up, I work; when the sun goes down, I rest. I wander free and easy between heaven and earth, and my mind has found all that it could wish for. What use would I have for the empire? What a pity that you don’t understand me!” In the end, he would not accept but went away, entering deep into the mountains, and no one ever knew where he had gone.

Shun wanted to cede the empire to his friend, the farmer of Stone Door. The farmer of Stone Door said, “Such vigor and vitality you have, my lord! You are a gentleman of perseverance and strength!” Then, surmising that Shun’s virtue would hardly amount to very much, he lifted his wife on his back, took his son by the hand, and disappeared among the islands of the sea, never to return to the end of his days.

When the Great King Danfu was living in Bin, the Di tribes attacked his territory.[2] He offered them skins and silks, but they refused them; he offered them dogs and horses, but they refused them; he offered them pearls and jades, but they refused them. What the men of the Di tribes were after was his land. The Great King Danfu said, “To live among the older brothers and send the younger brothers to their death; to live among the fathers and

send the sons to their death—this I cannot bear! My people, be diligent and remain where you are. What difference does it make whether you are subjects of mine or of the men of Di? I have heard it said, one must not injure that which he is nourishing for the sake of that by which he nourishes it."[3] Then, using his riding whip as a cane, he departed, but his people, leading one another, followed him and, in time, founded a new state at the foot of Mount Qi.

The Great King Danfu may be said to have known how to respect life. He who knows how to respect life, though he may be rich and honored, will not allow the means of nourishing life to injure his person. Though he may be poor and humble, he will not allow concerns of profit to entangle his body. The men of the present age, if they occupy high office and are honored with titles, all think only of how serious a matter it would be to lose them. Eyes fixed on profit, they make light of the risk to their lives. Are they not deluded indeed?

The men of Yue three times in succession assassinated their ruler. Prince Sou, fearful for his life, fled to the Cinnabar Cave, and the state of Yue was left without a ruler. The men of Yue, searching for Prince Sou and failing to find him, trailed him to the Cinnabar Cave, but he refused to come forth. They smoked him out with mugwort and placed him in the royal carriage. As Prince Sou took hold of the strap and pulled himself up into the carriage, he turned his face to heaven and cried, "To be a ruler! A ruler! Could I alone not have been spared this?" It was not that he hated to become their ruler; he hated the perils that go with being a ruler. Prince Sou, we may say, was the kind who would not allow the state to bring injury to his life. This, in fact, was precisely why the people of Yue wanted to obtain him for their ruler.

The states of Han and Wei were fighting over a piece of territory. Master Huazi went to see Marquis Zhaoxi, the ruler of Han. Marquis Zhaoxi had a worried look on his face. Master Huazi said, "Suppose the men of the empire were to draw up a written agreement and place it before you, and the inscription read: 'Seize this with your left hand and you will lose your right hand; seize it with your right hand and you will lose your left; yet he who seizes this will invariably gain possession of the empire.' Would you be willing to seize it?"

"I would not!" said Marquis Zhaoxi.

"Very good!" exclaimed Master Huazi. "From this I can see that your two hands are more important to you than the empire. And of course, your body as a whole is a great deal *more* important than your two hands, while the state of Han is a great deal *less* important than the empire as a whole. Moreover, this piece of territory that you are fighting over is a great deal less important than the state of Han as a whole. And yet you make yourself miserable and endanger your life, worrying and fretting because you can't get possession of it!"

"Excellent!" said Marquis Zhaoxi. "Many men have given me advice, but I have never been privileged to hear words such as these!" Master Huazi, we may say, understood the difference between important and unimportant things.

The ruler of Lu, having heard that Yan He was a man who had attained the Way, sent a messenger with gifts to open relations with him. Yan He was in his humble, back-alley home, wearing a robe of coarse hemp and feeding a cow, when the messenger from the ruler of Lu arrived, and he came to the door in person. “Is this the home of Yan He?” asked the messenger. “Yes, this is He’s house,” said Yan He. The messenger then presented his gifts, but Yan He said, “I’m afraid you must have gotten your instructions mixed up. You’ll surely be blamed if you give these to the wrong person, so you’d better check once more.” The messenger returned, checked his instructions, and then went looking for Yan He a second time, but he was never able to find him. Men like Yan He truly despise wealth and honor.

Hence it is said, The Truth of the Way lies in looking out for oneself; its fringes and leftovers consist in managing the state and its great families; its offal and weeds consist in governing the empire. The accomplishments of emperors and kings are superfluous affairs as far as the sage is concerned, not the means by which to keep the body whole and to care for life. Yet how many gentlemen of the vulgar world today endanger themselves and throw away their lives in the pursuit of mere things! How can you help pitying them? Whenever the sage makes a move, you may be certain that he has looked carefully to see where he is going and what he is about. Now suppose there was a man here who took the priceless pearl of the marquis of Sui and used it as a pellet to shoot at a sparrow a thousand yards up in the air—the world would certainly laugh at him. Why? Because that which he is using is of such great value, and that which he is trying to acquire is so trifling. And life—surely it is of greater value than the pearl of the marquis of Sui!

Master Liezi was living in poverty, and his face had a hungry look. A visitor mentioned this to Ziyang, the prime minister of Zheng, saying, “Lie Yukou appears to be a gentleman who has attained the Way. Here he is living in Your Excellency’s state, and in utter poverty! It would almost seem that Your Excellency has no fondness for such gentlemen, does it not?”

Ziyang immediately ordered his officials to dispatch a gift of grain. Master Liezi received the messenger, bowed twice, and refused the gift. When the messenger had left and Master Liezi had gone back into his house, his wife, filled with bitterness, beat her breast and said, “I have heard that the wives and children of men who have attained the Way all live in ease and happiness—but here *we* are with our hungry looks! His Excellency, realizing his error, has sent the Master something to eat, but the Master refuses to accept it—I suppose this is what they call Fate!”

Master Liezi laughed and said, “His Excellency does not know me personally—he sent me the grain simply because of what someone had told him. And someday he could just as well condemn me to punishment, again simply because of what someone told him. That’s why I refused to accept.”

In the end, as it happened, rebellion broke out among the people of Zheng, and Ziyang was murdered.

When King Zhao of Chu was driven from his state, the sheep butcher Yue fled at the same time and followed King Zhao into exile.[4] When King Zhao regained control of the state, he set about rewarding his followers, but when it came the turn of the sheep butcher Yue, Yue said, "His Majesty lost control of the state, and I lost my job as sheep butcher. Now His Majesty has regained the state, and I have also gotten back my sheep-butchering job. So my 'title and stipend' have already been restored to me. Why should there be any talk of a reward?"

"Force him to take it!" ordered the king.

But the sheep butcher Yue said, "The fact that His Majesty lost the kingdom was no fault of mine—therefore I would not venture to accept any punishment for it. And the fact that His Majesty has regained the kingdom is no accomplishment of mine—therefore I would not venture to accept any reward for it."

"Bring him into my presence!" ordered the king.

But the sheep butcher Yue said, "According to the laws of the state of Chu, a man must have received weighty awards and accomplished great deeds before he may be granted an audience with the ruler. Now I was not wise enough to save the state or brave enough to die in combat with the invaders. When the armies of Wu entered the city of Ying, I was afraid of the dangers ahead, so I ran away from the invaders. I did not purposely follow after His Majesty. Now His Majesty wishes to disregard the laws and break the precedents by granting me an audience. But in view of the facts, that would not win me any kind of reputation in the world!"

The king said to Ziqi, his minister of war, "The sheep butcher Yue is a man of mean and humble position, and yet his pronouncements on righteousness are lofty indeed! I want you to promote him to one of the 'three banner' offices."[5]

When told of this, the sheep butcher Yue said, "I am fully aware that the 'three banner' rank is a far more exalted place than a sheep butcher's stall and that a stipend of ten thousand *zhong* is more wealth than I will ever acquire slaughtering sheep. But how could I, merely out of greed for title and stipend, allow my ruler to gain a reputation for irresponsibly handing out such favors? I dare not accept. Please let me go back to my sheep butcher's stall." And in the end, he refused to accept the position.

Yuan Xian lived in the state of Lu, in a tiny house that was hardly more than four walls. It was thatched with growing weeds, had a broken door made of woven brambles and branches of mulberry for the doorposts; jars with the bottoms out, hung with pieces of coarse cloth for protection from the weather, served as windows for its two rooms.[6] The roof leaked, and the floor was damp, but Yuan Xian sat up in dignified manner, played his lute, and sang. Zigong, wearing an inner robe of royal blue and an outer one of white, and riding in a grand carriage whose top was too tall to get through the entrance to the lane, came to call on Yuan Xian. Yuan Xian, wearing a bark cap and slippers with no heels, and carrying a goosefoot staff, came to the gate to greet him.

"Goodness!" exclaimed Zigong. "What distress you are in, sir!"

Yuan Xian replied, “I have heard that if one lacks wealth, that is called poverty; and if one studies but cannot put into practice what he has learned, that is called distress. I am poor, but I am not in distress!”

Zigong backed off a few paces with a look of embarrassment. Yuan Xian laughed and said, “To act out of worldly ambition, to band with others in cliquish friendships, to study in order to show off to others, to teach in order to please one’s own pride, to mask one’s evil deeds behind benevolence and righteousness, to deck oneself out with carriages and horses—I could never bear to do such things!”

Zengzi[7] lived in the state of Wei, wearing a robe of quilted hemp with the outside worn through, his face blotchy and swollen, his hands and feet hard and callused. He would go three days without lighting a fire, ten years without making himself a new suit of clothes. If he tried to straighten his cap, the chin strap would break; if he pulled together his lapels, his elbows poked through the sleeves; if he stepped into his shoes, his heels broke out at the back. Yet, shuffling along, he would sing the sacrificial hymns of Shang in a voice that filled heaven and earth, as though it issued from a bell or a chiming stone. The Son of Heaven could not get him for his minister; the feudal lords could not get him for their friend. Hence he who nourishes his will forgets about his bodily form; he who nourishes his bodily form forgets about questions of gain; and he who arrives at the Way forgets about his mind.

Confucius said to Yan Hui, “Come here, Hui. Your family is poor and your position very lowly. Why don’t you become an official?”

Yan Hui replied, “I have no desire to become an official. I have fifty *mou* of farmland outside the outer wall,[8] which is enough to provide me with porridge and gruel, and I have ten *mou* of farmland inside the outer wall, which is enough to keep me in silk and hemp. Playing my lute gives me enjoyment enough; studying the Way of the Master gives me happiness enough. I have no desire to become an official.”

Confucius’s face took on a sheepish expression, and he said, “Excellent, Hui—this determination of yours! I have heard that he who knows what is enough will not let himself be entangled by thoughts of gain; that he who really understands how to find satisfaction will not be afraid of other kinds of loss; and that he who practices the cultivation of what is within him will not be ashamed because he holds no position in society. I have been preaching these ideas for a long time, but now for the first time I see them realized in you, Hui. This is what *I* have gained.”

Prince Mou of Wei, who was living in Zhongshan, said to Zhanzi, “My body is here beside these rivers and seas, but my mind is still back there beside the palace towers of Wei. What should I do about it?”[9]

“Attach more importance to life!” said Zhanzi. “He who regards life as important will think lightly of material gain.”

“I know that’s what I should do,” said Prince Mou. “But I can’t overcome my inclinations.”

“If you can’t overcome your inclinations, then follow them!” said Zhanzi.

“But won’t that do harm to the spirit?”

“If you can’t overcome your inclinations and yet you try to force yourself not to follow them, this is to do a double injury to yourself. Men who do such double injury to themselves are never found in the ranks of the long-lived!”

Wei Mou was a prince of a state of ten thousand chariots, and it was more difficult for him to retire and live among the cliffs and caves than for an ordinary person. Although he did not attain the Way, we may say that he had the will to do so.

Confucius was in distress between Chen and Cai. For seven days, he ate no properly cooked food but only a soup of greens without any grain in it. His face became drawn with fatigue, but he sat in his room playing the lute and singing. Yan Hui was outside picking vegetables, and Zilu and Zigong were talking with him. “Our Master was twice driven out of Lu,” they said. “They wiped out his footprints in Wei, chopped down a tree on him in Song, made trouble for him in Shang and Zhou, and are now besieging him here at Chen and Cai. Anyone who kills him will be pardoned of all guilt, and anyone who wishes to abuse him is free to do so. Yet he keeps playing and singing, strumming the lute without ever letting the sound die away. Can a gentleman really be as shameless as all this?”

Yan Hui, having no answer, went in and reported what they had said to Confucius. Confucius pushed aside his lute, heaved a great sigh, and said, “Those two are picayune men! Call them in here—I’ll talk to them.”

When Zilu and Zigong had entered the room, Zilu said, “I guess you could say that all of us are really blocked in this time.”[10]

Confucius said, “What kind of talk is that! When the gentleman gets through to the Way, this is called ‘getting through.’ When he is blocked off from the Way, this is called ‘being blocked.’ Now I embrace the way of benevolence and righteousness and, with it, encounter the perils of an age of disorder. Where is there any ‘being blocked’ about this? So I examine what is within me and am never blocked off from the Way. I face the difficulties ahead and do not lose its Virtue. When the cold days come and the frost and snow have fallen, then I understand how the pine and the cypress flourish.[11] These perils here in Chen and Cai are a blessing to me!” Confucius then turned complacently back to his lute and began to play and sing again. Zilu excitedly snatched up a shield and began to dance, while Zigong said, “I did not realize that Heaven is so far above, earth so far below!”

The men of ancient times who had attained the Way were happy if they were blocked in, and happy if they could get through. It was not the fact that they were blocked or not that made them happy. As long as you have really gotten hold of the Way,[12] then being blocked or getting through are no more than the orderly alternation of cold and heat, of wind and rain. Therefore Xu You enjoyed himself on the sunny side of the Ying River, and Gong Bo found what he wanted on top of a hill.[13]

Shun wanted to cede the empire to his friend, a man from the north named Wuze. Wuze said, “What a peculiar man this ruler of ours is! First he lived among the fields and ditches,

then he went wandering about the gate of Yao. Not content to let it rest at that, he now wants to take his disgraceful doings and dump them all over me. I would be ashamed even to see him!" Thereupon he threw himself into the deeps at Chingling.

* * *

When Tang was about to attack Jie, he went to Bian Sui for help in plotting the strategy.[14] "It's nothing I'd know anything about!" said Bian Sui.

"Who would be good?" asked Tang.

"I don't know."

Tang then went to Wu Guang and asked for help. "It's nothing I'd know anything about!" said Wu Guang.

"Who would be good?" asked Tang.

"I don't know."

"How about Yi Yin?" asked Tang.

"A man of violence and force, willing to put up with disgrace—I know nothing else about him."

In the end Tang went to Yi Yin, and together they plotted the attack. Having overthrown Jie, Tang then offered to cede the throne to Bian Sui, Bian Sui refused, saying, "When you were plotting to attack Jie, you came to me for advice—so you must have thought I was capable of treason. Now you have defeated Jie and want to cede the throne to me—so you must think I am avaricious. I was born into this world of disorder, and now a man with no understanding of the Way twice comes and tries to slop his disgraceful doings all over me! I can't bear to go on listening to such proposals again and again!" Thereupon he threw himself into the Chou River and drowned.

Tang tried to cede the throne to Wu Guang, saying, "The wise man does the plotting, the military man the seizing, and the benevolent man the occupying—such was the way of antiquity. Now why will you not accept the position?"

But Wu Guang refused, saying, "To depose your sovereign is no act of righteousness; to slaughter the people is no act of benevolence; to inflict trouble on other men and enjoy the benefits yourself is no act of integrity. I have heard it said, If the man is without righteousness, do not take his money; if the world is without the Way, do not tread on its soil. And you expect me to accept such a position of honor? I can't bear the sight of you any longer!" Thereupon he loaded a stone onto his back and drowned himself in the Lu River.

Long ago, when the Zhou dynasty first came to power, there were two gentlemen who lived in Guzhu named Bo Yi and Shu Qi. They said to each other, "We hear that in the western region there is a man who seems to possess the Way. Let us try going to look for him." When they reached the sunny side of Mount Qi, King Wu, hearing of them, sent his younger brother Dan to meet them.[15] He offered to draw up a pact with them, saying, "You will be granted wealth of the second order and offices of the first rank, the pact to be sealed in blood and buried."[16]

The two men looked at each other and laughed, saying, “Hah—how peculiar! This is certainly not what *we* would call the Way! In ancient times, when Shennong held possession of the empire, he performed the seasonal sacrifices with the utmost reverence, but he did not pray for blessings. In his dealings with men, he was loyal and trustworthy and observed perfect order, but he did not seek anything from them. He delighted in ruling for the sake of ruling; he delighted in bringing order for the sake of order. He did not use other men’s failures to bring about his own success; he did not use other men’s degradation to lift himself up. Just because he happened along at a lucky time, he did not try to turn it to his own profit. Now the Zhou, observing that the Yin have fallen into disorder, suddenly makes a show of its rule, honoring those who know how to scheme, handing out bribes,[17] relying on weapons to maintain its might, offering sacrifices and drawing up pacts to impress men with its good faith, lauding its achievements in order to seize gain—this is simply to push aside disorder and replace it with violence!

“We have heard that the gentlemen of old, if they happened upon a well-ordered age, did not run away from public office; but if they encountered an age of disorder, they did not try to hold on to office at any cost. Now the world is in darkness, and the virtue of the Zhou in decline.[18] Rather than remain side by side with the Zhou and defile our bodies, it would be better to run away and thus protect the purity of our conduct!” The two gentlemen thereupon went north as far as Mount Shouyang, where they eventually died of starvation.

Men such as Bo Yi and Shu Qi will have nothing to do with wealth and eminence if they can possibly avoid it. To be lofty in principle and meticulous in conduct, delighting in one’s will alone without stooping to serve the world—such was the ideal of these two gentlemen.

1. On Yao, Xu You, and the ceding of the throne, see p. 3. In this chapter, the writer illustrates the theme with tales of various historical or legendary figures.

2. Danfu, ancestor of the royal house of Zhou, was the grandfather of King Wen, the founder of the Zhou dynasty.

3. That is, the lives of his people are far more precious to the ruler than the possession of his territory. This moral and the story of Danfu that illustrates it are famous in early Chinese literature and are found in numerous texts of the period.

4. King Zhao was forced by the invading armies of Wu to flee his state in 506 BCE; he returned the following year.

5. Some versions of the text call them the “three scepter” offices; they are defined by commentators as the three highest ministerial posts in the state of Chu.

6. Yuan Xian, a disciple of Confucius, was famous for his indifference to poverty. Zigong, who figures in this anecdote, was the most affluent of Confucius’s disciples.

7. Zeng Shen; see p. 227.

8. About enough land to feed four people; cf. *Mencius* IA, 24.

9. Prince Mou of Wei appeared on p. 135. Apparently he was trying, without much success, to live the life of a hermit. Zhanzi, or Zhan He, is mentioned in early texts as a Daoist adept.

10. The passage that follows involves a great deal of wordplay on the various meanings of *qiong* (to be blocked, hence, to be in trouble, in distress, etc.) and *da* (to get through, hence to master, to succeed).

11. A paraphrase of Confucius's remarks in *Analects* IX, 27: "Only when the year grows cold do we see that the pine and cypress are the last to fade."

12. Reading *de* (get) in place of *de* (virtue); compare the parallel text in *Lüshi chunchiu*, ch. 14, sec. 6.

13. Gong Bo was said to have occupied the throne for fourteen years (842–828 BCE) but abdicated and retired to a place called Mount Gong.

14. Tang attacked and overthrew his sovereign, Jie, the last ruler of the Xia dynasty, and founded the Shang or Yin dynasty.

15. Dan is better known by his title, the Duke of Zhou. Other versions of the story make it clear that the "man who seems to possess the Way," whose reputation had attracted the brothers, was King Wu's father, King Wen, who was already dead by this time.

16. According to ancient custom, an animal was sacrificed, and the parties to the pact smeared the corners of their mouths with its blood; then the text of the agreement was also smeared with blood and was buried beneath the sacrificial altar.

17. Following Wang Niansun's suggestions, I omit the word *xia*.

18. That is, King Wu, by resorting to arms and overthrowing the Yin dynasty, has shown himself far inferior to his father, King Wen, or his great grandfather, the Great King Danfu of the anecdote on p. 240. But some commentators would emend this to read "the virtue of the Yin."

29

ROBBER ZHI

Confucius was a friend of Liuxia Ji, who had a younger brother known as Robber Zhi. Robber Zhi, with a band of nine thousand followers, rampaged back and forth across the empire, assaulting and terrorizing the feudal lords, tunneling into houses, prying open doors,[1] herding off men's horses and cattle, seizing their wives and daughters. Greedy for gain, he forgot his kin, gave not a look to father or mother, elder or younger brother, and performed no sacrifices to his ancestors. Whenever he approached a city, if it was that of a great state, the inhabitants manned their walls; if that of a small state, they fled into their strongholds. The ten thousand people all lived in dread of him.

Confucius said to Liuxia Ji, "One who is a father must be able to lay down the law to his son, and one who is an elder brother must be able to teach his younger brother. If a father cannot lay down the law to his son and an elder brother cannot teach his younger brother, then the relationship between father and son and elder and younger brother loses all value. Now here you are, sir, one of the most talented gentlemen of the age, and your younger brother is Robber Zhi, a menace to the world, and you seem unable to teach him any better! If I may say so, I blush for you. I would therefore like to go on your behalf and try to persuade him to change his ways."

Liuxia Ji said, "You have remarked, sir, that a father must be able to lay down the law to his son, and an elder brother must be able to teach his younger brother. But if the son will not listen when his father lays down the law, or if the younger brother refuses to heed his elder brother's teachings, then even with eloquence such as yours, what is there to be done? Moreover, Zhi is a man with a mind like a jetting fountain, a will like a blast of wind, with strength enough to fend off any enemy, and cunning enough to gloss over any evil. If you go along with his way of thinking, he is delighted, but if you go against him, he becomes furious, and it is nothing to him to curse people in the vilest language. You must not go near him!"

But Confucius paid no attention, and with Yan Hui as his carriage driver, and Zigong on his right, he went off to visit Robber Zhi. Robber Zhi was just at that time resting with his band of followers on the sunny side of Mount Tai and enjoying a late afternoon snack of minced human livers. Confucius stepped down from the carriage and went forward till he saw the officer in charge of receiving guests. "I am Kong Qiu, a native of Lu, and I have heard that your general is a man of lofty principles," he said, respectfully bowing twice to the officer. The officer then entered and relayed the message. When Robber Zhi heard this,

he flew into a great rage. His eyes blazed like shining stars, and his hair stood on end and bristled beneath his cap. “This must be none other than that crafty hypocrite Kong Qiu from the state of Lu! Well, tell him this for me. You make up your stories, invent your phrases, babbling absurd eulogies of Kings Wen and Wu. Topped with a cap like a branching tree, wearing a girdle made from the ribs of a dead cow, you pour out your flood of words, your fallacious theories. You eat without ever plowing, clothe yourself without ever weaving. Wagging your lips, clacking your tongue, you invent any kind of ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ that suits you, leading astray the rulers of the world, keeping the scholars of the world from returning to the Source, capriciously setting up ideals of ‘filial piety’ and ‘brotherliness,’ all the time hoping to worm your way into favor with the lords of the fiefs or the rich and eminent! Your crimes are huge, your offenses grave.[2] You had better run home as fast as you can, because if you don’t, I will take your liver and add it to this afternoon’s menu!”

Confucius sent in word again, saying, “I have the good fortune to know your brother Ji, and therefore I beg to be allowed to gaze from a distance at your feet beneath the curtain.”[3]

When the officer relayed this message, Robber Zhi said, “Let him come forward.” Confucius came scurrying forward, declined the mat that was set out for him, stepped back a few paces, and bowed twice to Robber Zhi. Robber Zhi, still in a great rage, sat with both legs sprawled out, leaning on his sword, his eyes glaring. In a voice like the roar of a nursing tigress, he said, “Qiu, come forward! If what you have to say pleases my fancy, you live. If it rubs me the wrong way, you die!”

Confucius said, “I have heard that in all the world there are three kinds of virtue. To grow up to be big and tall, with matchless good looks, so that everyone, young or old, eminent or humble, delights in you—this is the highest kind of virtue. To have wisdom that encompasses heaven and earth, to be able to speak eloquently on all subjects—this is middling virtue. To be brave and fierce, resolute and determined, gathering a band of followers around you—this is the lowest kind of virtue. Any man who possesses even one of these virtues is worthy to face south and call himself the Lonely One.[4] And now here you are, General, with all three of them! You tower eight feet two inches in height; radiance streams from your face and eyes; your lips are like gleaming cinnabar; your teeth like ranged seashells; your voice attuned to the *huang zhong* pitch pipe—and yet your only title is ‘Robber Zhi.’ If I may say so, General, this is disgraceful—a real pity indeed! But if you have a mind to listen to my proposal, then I beg to be allowed to go as your envoy south to Wu and Yue, north to Qi and Lu, east to Song and Wei, and west to Jin and Chu, persuading them to create for you a great walled state several hundred *li* in size, to establish a town of several hundred thousand households, and to honor you as one of the feudal lords. Then you may make a new beginning with the world, lay down your weapons and disperse your followers, gather together and cherish your brothers and kinsmen, and join with them in sacrifices to your ancestors. This would be the act of a sage, a gentleman of true talent, and the fondest wish of the world.”

Robber Zhi, furious as ever, said, “Qiu, come forward! Those who can be swayed with offers of gain or reformed by a babble of words are mere idiots, simpletons, the commonest

sort of men! The fact that I am big and tall and so handsome that everyone delights to look at me—this is a virtue inherited from my father and mother. Even without your praises, do you think I would be unaware of it? Moreover, I have heard that those who are fond of praising men to their faces are also fond of damning them behind their backs.

"Now you tell me about this great walled state, this multitude of people, trying to sway me with offers of gain, to lead me by the nose like any common fool. But how long do you think I could keep possession of it? There is no walled state larger than the empire itself, and yet, though Yao and Shun possessed the empire, their heirs were left with less land than it takes to stick the point of an awl into. Tang and Wu set themselves up as Son of Heaven, yet in ages after, their dynasties were cut off and wiped out. Was this not because the gains they had acquired were so great?

"Moreover, I have heard that in ancient times the birds and beasts were many and the people few. Therefore the people all nested in the trees in order to escape danger, during the day gathering acorns and chestnuts, at sundown climbing back up to sleep in their trees. Hence they were called the people of the Nest Builder. In ancient times the people knew nothing about wearing clothes. In summer they heaped up great piles of firewood; in winter they burned them to keep warm. Hence they were called 'the people who know how to stay alive.' In the age of Shennong, the people lay down peaceful and easy, woke up wide-eyed and blank. They knew their mothers but not their fathers and lived side by side with the elk and the deer. They plowed for their food, wove for their clothing, and had no thought in their hearts of harming one another. This was Perfect Virtue at its height!

"But the Yellow Emperor could not attain such virtue. He fought with Chi You in the field of Zhuolu until the blood flowed for a hundred *li*.[5] Yao and Shun came to the throne, setting up a host of officials; Tang banished his sovereign Jie; King Wu murdered his sovereign Zhou; and from this time on, the strong oppressed the weak, the many abused the few. From Tang and Wu until the present, all have been no more than a pack of rebels and wrongdoers. And now you come cultivating the ways of Kings Wen and Wu, utilizing all the eloquence in the world in order to teach these things to later generations! In your flowing robes and loose-tied sash, you speak your deceits and act out your hypocrisies, confusing and leading astray the rulers of the world, hoping thereby to lay your hands on wealth and eminence. There is no worse robber than you! I don't know why, if the world calls me Robber Zhi, it doesn't call you Robber Qiu!

"With your honeyed words you persuaded Zilu to become your follower, to doff his jaunty cap, unbuckle his long sword, and receive instruction from you, so that all the world said, 'Kong Qiu knows how to suppress violence and put a stop to evil.' But in the end Zilu tried to kill the ruler of Wei, bungled the job, and they pickled his corpse and hung it up on the eastern gate of Wei. This was how little effect your teachings had on him![6] You call yourself a gentleman of talent, a sage? Twice they drove you out of Lu; they wiped out your footprints in Wei, made trouble for you in Qi, and besieged you at Chen and Cai—no place in the empire will have you around! You gave instruction to Zilu, and pickling was the disaster it brought him. You can't look out for yourself to begin with, or for others either—so how can this 'Way' of yours be worth anything?

“There is no one more highly esteemed by the world than the Yellow Emperor, and yet even the Yellow Emperor could not preserve his virtue intact but fought on the field of Zhuolu until the blood flowed for a hundred *li*. Yao was a merciless father, Shun was an unfilial son, Yu was half paralyzed, Tang banished his sovereign Jie, King Wu attacked his sovereign Zhou, and King Wen was imprisoned at Youli.[7] All these seven men[8] are held in high esteem by the world, and yet a close look shows that all of them, for the sake of gain, brought confusion to the Truth within them, that they forcibly turned against their true form and inborn nature. For doing so, they deserve the greatest shame!

“When the world talks of worthy gentlemen, we hear ‘Bo Yi and Shu Qi.’ Yet Bo Yi and Shu Qi declined the rulership of the state of Guzhu and instead went and starved to death on Shouyang Mountain, with no one to bury their bones and flesh. Bao Jiao made a great show of his conduct and condemned the world; he wrapped his arms around a tree and stood there till he died. Shentu Di offered a remonstrance that was unheeded; he loaded a stone onto his back and threw himself into a river, where the fish and turtles feasted on him. Jie Zitui was a model of fealty, going so far as to cut a piece of flesh from his thigh to feed his lord, Duke Wen. But later, when Duke Wen overlooked him, he went off in a rage, wrapped his arms around a tree, and burned to death.[9] Wei Sheng made an engagement to meet a girl under a bridge. The girl failed to appear and the water began to rise, but instead of leaving, he wrapped his arms around the pillar of the bridge and died. These six men were no different from a flayed dog, a pig sacrificed to the flood, a beggar with his alms gourd in his hand. All were ensnared by thoughts of reputation and looked lightly on death, failing to remember the Source or to cherish the years that fate had given them.

“When the world talks about loyal ministers, we are told that there were none to surpass Prince Bi Gan and Wu Zixu. Yet Wu Zixu sank into the river, and Bi Gan had his heart cut out.[10] These two men are called loyal ministers by the world, and yet they ended up as the laughingstock of the empire. Looking at all these men, from the first I mentioned down to Wu Zixu and Bi Gan, it is obvious that none is worth respecting.

“Now in this sermon of yours, Qiu, if you tell me about the affairs of ghosts, then I have no way of judging what you say. But if you tell me about the affairs of men—and it is no more than what you’ve said so far—then I’ve heard it all already!

“And now I’m going to tell *you* something—about man’s true form. His eyes yearn to see colors, his ears to hear sound, his mouth to taste flavors, his will and spirit to achieve fulfillment. A man of the greatest longevity will live a hundred years; one of middling longevity, eighty years; and one of the least longevity, sixty years. Take away the time lost in nursing illnesses, mourning the dead, worry and anxiety, and in this life there are no more than four or five days in a month when a man can open his mouth and laugh. Heaven and earth are unending, but man has his time of death. Take this time-bound toy, put it down in these unending spaces, and whoosh!—it is over as quickly as the passing of a swift horse glimpsed through a crack in the wall! No man who is incapable of gratifying his desires and cherishing the years that fate has given him can be called a master of the Way. What you have been telling me—I reject every bit of it! Quick, now—be on your way. I want no more of your talk. This ‘Way’ you tell me about is inane and inadequate, a

fraudulent, crafty, vain, hypocritical affair, not the sort of thing that is capable of preserving the Truth within. How can it be worth discussing!"

Confucius bowed twice and scurried away. Outside the gate, he climbed into his carriage and fumbled three times in an attempt to grasp the reins, his eyes blank and unseeing, his face the color of dead ashes. Leaning on the crossbar, head bent down, he could not seem to summon up any spirit at all.

Returning to Lu, he had arrived just outside the eastern gate of the capital when he happened to meet Liuxia Ji. "I haven't so much as caught sight of you for the past several days," said Liuxia Ji, "and your carriage and horses look as though they've been out on the road—it couldn't be that you went to see my brother Zhi, could it?"

Confucius looked up to heaven, sighed, and said, "I did."

"And he was enraged by your views, just as I said he would be?" said Liuxia Ji.

"He was," said Confucius. "You might say that I gave myself the burning moxa treatment when I wasn't even sick. I went rushing off to pat the tiger's head and braid its whiskers—and very nearly didn't manage to escape from its jaws!"

Zizhang said to Man Goude, "Why don't you think more about your conduct?[11] No distinguished conduct means no trust; no trust means no official position; no official position means no gain. So if it's reputation you have your eye on or gain you're scheming for, then righteous conduct is the real key. And if you set aside considerations of reputation and gain and return to the true nature of the heart, then, too, I would say that you ought not to let a single day pass without taking thought for your conduct."

Man Goude said, "Those who are shameless get rich; those who are widely trusted become famous. The really big reputation and gain seem to go to men who are shameless and trusted. So if your eyes are set on reputation and you scheme for gain, then trust is the real key. And if you set aside considerations of reputation and gain and return to the heart, then in your conduct, I think you ought to hold fast to the Heaven within you."[12]

Zizhang said, "In ancient times, the tyrants Jie and Zhou enjoyed the honor of being Son of Heaven and possessed all the wealth of the empire. Yet now if you say to a mere slave or groom, 'Your conduct is like that of a Jie or Zhou,' he will look shamefaced and, in his heart, will not acquiesce to such charges, for even a petty man despises the names of Jie and Zhou. Confucius and Mo Di, on the other hand, were impoverished commoners. Yet now if you say to the highest minister of state, 'Your conduct is like that of Confucius or Mo Di,' he will flush and alter his expression and protest that he is not worthy of such praise, for a gentleman sincerely honors their names. Therefore, to wield the power of a Son of Heaven does not necessarily mean to be honored, and to be poor and a commoner does not necessarily mean to be despised. The difference between being honored and being despised lies in the goodness or badness of one's conduct."

Man Goude said, "The petty thief is imprisoned but the big thief becomes a feudal lord, and we all know that righteous gentlemen are to be found at the gates of the feudal lords. In ancient times, Xiaobo, Duke Huan of Qi, murdered his elder brother and took his sister-in-law for a wife, and yet Guan Zhong was willing to become his minister. Chang, Viscount

Tian Cheng, murdered his sovereign and stole his state, and yet Confucius was willing to receive gifts from him.[13] In pronouncement they condemned them, but in practice they bowed before them. Think how this contradiction between the facts of word and deed must have troubled their breasts! Could the two help but clash? So the book says, Who is bad? Who is good? The successful man becomes the head, the unsuccessful man becomes the tail."

"But," said Zizhang, "if you take no thought for conduct, then there ceases to be any ethical ties between near and distant kin, any fitting distinctions between noble and humble, any proper order between elder and younger. How is one to maintain the distinctions decreed by the five moral principles and the six social relationships?"

Man Goude said, "Yao killed his eldest son; Shun exiled his mother's younger brother—does this indicate any ethical ties between near and distant kin? Tang banished his sovereign Jie; King Wu killed his sovereign Zhou—does this indicate any fitting distinctions between noble and humble? King Ji received the inheritance; the Duke of Zhou killed his elder brother—does this indicate any proper order between elder and younger?[14] The Confucians with their hypocritical speeches, the Mohists with their talk of universal love—do these indicate any attempt to maintain the distinctions decreed by the five moral principles and the six social relationships? Now your thoughts are all for reputation, mine all for gain, but neither reputation nor gain, in fact, accords with reason or reflects any true understanding of the Way. The other day when we referred the matter to Wu Yue for arbitration, he gave this answer:[15]

"'The petty man will die for riches, the gentleman will die for reputation. In the manner in which they alter their true form and change their inborn nature, they differ. But insofar as they throw away what is already theirs and are willing to die for something that is not theirs, they are identical. So it is said, Do not be a petty man—return to and obey the Heaven within you; do not be a gentleman—follow the reason of Heaven. Crooked or straight, pursue to the limit the Heaven in you. Turn your face to the four directions; ebb and flow with the seasons. Right or wrong, hold fast to the round center on which all turns; in solitude bring your will to completion; ramble in the company of the Way. Do not strive to make your conduct consistent;[16] do not try to perfect your righteousness, or you will lose what you already have. Do not race after riches; do not risk your life for success, or you will let slip the Heaven within you. Bi Gan's heart was cut out; Wu Zixu's eyes were plucked from their sockets—loyalty brought them this misfortune. Honest Gong informed on his father; Wei Sheng died by drowning—trustworthiness was their curse. Bao Jiao stood there till he dried up; Shenzi would not defend himself—integrity did them this injury. Confucius did not see his mother; Kuangzi did not see his father—righteousness was their mistake.[17] These are the tales handed down from ages past, retold by the ages that follow. They show us that the gentleman who is determined to be upright in word and consistent in conduct will, as a result, bow before disaster, will encounter affliction.'"

Never-Enough said to Sense-of-Harmony, "After all, there are no men who do not strive for reputation and seek gain. If you're rich, people flock to you; flocking to you, they bow

and scrape; and when they bow and scrape, this shows they honor you. To have men bowing and scraping, offering you honor—this is the way to ensure length of years, ease to the body, joy to the will. And now you alone have no mind for these things. Is it lack of understanding? Or is it that you know their worth but just haven't the strength to work for them? Are you, then, deliberately striving 'to be upright and never forgetful'?"

Sense-of-Harmony said, "You and your type look at those who were born at the same time and who dwell in the same community, and you decide that you are gentlemen who are far removed from the common lot, who are superior to the times. This shows that you have no guiding principle by which to survey the ages of past and present, the distinctions between right and wrong. Instead you join with the vulgar in changing as the world changes, setting aside what is most valuable, discarding what is most worthy of honor, thinking that there is something that has to be done, declaring that this is the way to ensure length of years, ease to the body, joy to the will—but you are far from the mark indeed! The agitation of grief and sorrow, the solace of contentment and joy—these bring no enlightenment to the body. The shock of fear and terror, the elation of happiness and delight—these bring no enlightenment to the mind. You know you are doing what there is to do, but you don't know why there should be things to do. This way, you might possess all the honor of the Son of Heaven, all the wealth of the empire, and yet never escape from disaster."

"But," said Never-Enough, "there is no advantage that riches cannot bring to a man—the ultimate in beauty, the heights of power, things that the Perfect Man cannot attain to, that the worthy man can never acquire. They buy the strength and daring of other men that make one awesome and powerful; they purchase the knowledge and schemes of other men that make one wise and well informed; they borrow the virtue of other men that make one a man of worth and goodness. With no kingdom to reign over, the rich man commands as much respect as a ruler or a father. Beautiful sounds and colors, rich flavors, power and authority—a man need not send his mind to school before it will delight in them, need not train his body before it will find peace in them. What to desire, what to hate, what to seek, what to avoid—no one needs a teacher in these matters; they pertain to the inborn nature of man. Don't think this applies only to me. Where is there a man in the whole world who would be willing to give them up?"

Sense-of-Harmony said, "When the wise man goes about doing something, he always moves for the sake of the hundred clans and does not violate the rules. Thus, if there is enough, he does not scramble for more. Having no reason to, he seeks nothing. But if there is not enough, he seeks, scrambling in all four directions, yet he does not think of himself as greedy. If there is a surplus, he gives it away. He can discard the whole empire and yet not think of himself as high-minded. Greed or high-mindedness, in fact, have nothing to do with standards imposed from the outside—they represent a turning within to observe the rules that are found there. So a man may wield all the power of a Son of Heaven and yet not use his high position to lord it over others; he may possess all the wealth in the empire and yet not exploit his riches to make a mockery of others. He calculates the risk, thinks of what may be contrary and harmful to his inborn nature. Therefore he may decline what is offered him, but not because he hopes for reputation and praise. Yao and Shun ruled as

emperors and there was harmony—but not because they sought to bring benevolence to the world; they would not have let ‘goodness’ injure their lives. Shan Quan and Xu You had the opportunity to become emperors and declined, but not because they wished to make an empty gesture of refusal; they would not have let such matters bring harm to themselves. All these men sought what was to their advantage and declined what was harmful. The world praises them as worthies, and it is all right if they enjoy such repute—but they were not striving for any reputation or praise.”

“But in order to maintain a reputation like theirs,” said Never-Enough, “one must punish the body and give up everything sweet, skimp and save merely to keep life going—in which case one is no different from a man who goes on year after year in sickness and trouble, never allowed to die!”

Sense-of-Harmony said, “A just measure brings fortune, an excess brings harm—this is so of all things, but much more so in the case of wealth. The ears of the rich man are regaled with sounds of bell and drum, flute and pipe; his mouth is treated to the flavor of grass- and grain-fed animals, of rich wine, until his desires are aroused and he has forgotten all about his proper business—this may be called disorder. Mired and drowned by swelling passions, he is like a man who carries a heavy load up the slope of a hill—this may be called suffering. Greedy for riches, he brings illness on himself; greedy for power, he drives himself to exhaustion. In the quietude of his home, he sinks into languor; body sleek and well nourished, he is puffed up with passion—this may be called disease. In his desire for wealth, his search for gain, he crams his rooms to overflowing, as it were, and does not know how to escape, yet he lusts for more and cannot desist—this may be called shame. More wealth piled up than he could ever use, yet he is covetous and will not leave off, crowding his mind with care and fatigue, grasping for more and more with never a stop—this may be called worry. At home he is suspicious of the inroads of pilferers and inordinate demanders; abroad he is terrified of the attacks of bandits and robbers. At home he surrounds himself with towers and moats; abroad he dares not walk alone—this may be called terror. These six—disorder, suffering, disease, shame, worry, and terror—are the greatest evils in the world. Yet all are forgotten, and he does not know enough to keep watch out for them. And once disaster has come, then, though he seeks with all his inborn nature and exhausts all his wealth in hopes of returning even for one day to the untroubled times, he can never do so.

“Therefore he who sets his eyes on reputation will find that it is nowhere to be seen; he who seeks for gain will find that it is not to be gotten. To entrap the mind and the body in a scramble for such things—is this not delusion indeed?”

1. Following the emendation suggested by Sun Yirang.

2. Following the emendation suggested by Yu Yue.

3. A phrase of utmost politeness; Confucius would not venture to come close or look up at the face of his host but only gaze at his feet where they show beneath the curtain of state.

4. That is, become a ruler. The Chinese ruler faces south and refers to himself as the "Lonely One," either because of the uniqueness of his position or, if he has inherited the throne, because his father is dead.

5. Chi You is a legendary being, often described as part man and part animal, who is associated in Chinese mythology with warfare and the invention of weapons.

6. According to legend, Zilu, before he met Confucius, was a brash warrior noted for his courage. In the revolt in Wei, which took place in 480 BCE, he seems to have fought and died out of a sense of loyalty to the man whose retainer he was; see *Zuozhuan*, Duke Ai, fifteenth year.

7. Yao killed his eldest son; Shun banished his mother's younger brother; and Yu worked so hard trying to control the flood that he became paralyzed on one side. Confucian writers on the whole recognize the various assertions here made as historical fact but offer justifications for them all.

8. Reading "seven" instead of "six." Some commentators would retain the "six" and delete King Wen's name from the list.

9. Bao Jiao is said to have been a recluse who refused to acknowledge allegiance to any sovereign but lived in the forest and ate acorns. When someone pointed out that even this constituted a utilization of the land resources of the ruler, he committed suicide in the bizarre fashion mentioned here. Shentu Di has already appeared on pp. 43 and 233. Jie Zitui, retainer to Prince Chonger of Jin, faithfully served the prince during nineteen years of exile, saving him from starvation in the manner described. But when the prince returned to Jin in 636 BCE and became its ruler, he forgot to reward Jie Zitui. Angered, Jie withdrew to a forest; when the ruler tried to smoke him out, he chose to die in the fire.

10. On Prince Bi Gan, see p. 23, on Wu Zixu, see p. 140, n. 2.

11. The point of departure for this colloquy, as Legge pointed out, is probably the remark in *Analects* II, 18, that "Zizhang studies with a view to official emolument." Man Goude is a fictitious name meaning "Full of Ill-Gotten Gains."

12. That is, act naturally.

13. On Duke Huan and Guan Zhong, see p. 150; on Tian Cheng, see p. 68.

14. King Ji, a younger son of the Great King Danfu (see p. 240) succeeded his father instead of his elder brother; the usual explanation is that the elder brother, realizing Ji's worth, deliberately withdrew and went into exile. The Duke of Zhou (reluctantly, we are told), executed his elder brother who was plotting revolt.

15. The name Wu Yue means "without bonds"; his answer, like all the speeches in this anecdote, is highly contrived and couched in rhymed and elaborately balanced phrases.

16. Following Wang Niansun's interpretation.

17. Some of these figures appeared earlier, esp. on p. 257. Honest Gong of Chu informed the authorities when his father stole a sheep but, instead of receiving praise, was sentenced to death for his unfilial conduct. Shenzi is probably Shensheng, prince of Jin, who refused to clear himself of the false charge of trying to poison his father because to do so would expose his father to ridicule. Nothing definite is known about the charges against Confucius and Kuangzi, though commentators speculate that the meaning is that they were not present at the death of their parents.

30

DISCOURSING ON SWORDS[1]

In ancient times, King Wen of Zhao was fond of swords. Expert swordsmen flocked to his gate, and more than three thousand of them were supported as guests in his household, day and night, engaging in bouts in his presence till the dead and wounded numbered more than a hundred men a year. Yet the king's delight never seemed to wane, and things went on in this way for three years while the state sank into decline and the other feudal lords conspired against it.

The crown prince Kui, distressed at this, summoned his retainers around him and said, "I will bestow a thousand pieces of gold on any man who can reason with the king and make him give up these sword fights!"

"Zhuangzi is the one who can do it," said his retainers.

The crown prince thereupon sent an envoy with a thousand pieces of gold to present to Zhuangzi, but Zhuangzi refused to accept the gift. Instead he accompanied the envoy on his return and went to call on the crown prince. "What instructions do you have for me, that you present me with a thousand pieces of gold?" he asked.

"I had heard, sir," said the crown prince, "that you are an enlightened sage, and I wished in all due respect to offer this thousand in gold as a gift to your attendants. But if you refuse to accept it, then I dare say no more about the matter."

Zhuangzi said, "I have heard that the crown prince wishes to employ me because he hopes I can rid the king of this passion of his. Now if, in attempting to persuade His Majesty, I should arouse his anger and fail to satisfy your hopes, then I would be sentenced to execution. In that case, what use could I make of the gold? And if I should be able to persuade His Majesty and satisfy your hopes, then what could I ask for in the whole kingdom of Zhao that would not be granted me?"

"The trouble is," said the crown prince, "that my father, the king, refuses to see anyone but swordsmen."

"Fine!" said Zhuangzi. "I am quite able to handle a sword."

"But the kind of swordsmen my father receives," said the crown prince, "all have tousled heads and bristling beards, wear slouching caps tied with plain, coarse tassels, and robes that are cut short behind; they glare fiercely and have difficulty getting out their words. Men like that he is delighted with! Now, sir, if you should insist on going to see him in scholarly garb, the whole affair would go completely wrong from the start."

"Then allow me to get together the garb of a swords-man," said Zhuangzi. After three days, he had his swordsman's costume ready and went to call on the crown prince. The

crown prince and he then went to see the king. The king, drawing his sword, waited with bare blade in hand. Zhuangzi entered the door of the hall with unhurried steps, looked at the king but made no bow.

The king said, "Now that you have gotten the crown prince to prepare the way for you, what kind of instruction is it you intend to give me?"

"I have heard that Your Majesty is fond of swords, and so I have come with my sword to present myself before you."

"And what sort of authority does your sword command?" asked the king.

"My sword cuts down one man every ten paces, and for a thousand *li* it never ceases its flailing!"

The king, greatly pleased, exclaimed, "You must have no rival in the whole world!"

Zhuangzi said, "The wielder of the sword makes a display of emptiness, draws one out with hopes of advantage, is behind time in setting out, but beforehand in arriving.[2] May I be allowed to try what I can do?"

The king said, "You may leave now, sir, and go to your quarters to await my command. When I am ready to hold the bout, I will request your presence again."

The king then spent seven days testing the skill of his swordsmen. More than sixty were wounded or died in the process, leaving five or six survivors who were ordered to present themselves with their swords outside the king's hall. Then the king sent for Zhuangzi, saying, "Today let us see what happens when you cross swords with these gentlemen."

Zhuangzi said, "It is what I have long wished for."

"What weapon will you use, sir," asked the king, "a long sword or a short one?"

"I am prepared to use any type at all. It happens that I have three swords—Your Majesty has only to indicate which you wish me to use. If I may, I will first explain them, and then put them to the test."

"Let me hear about your three swords," said the king.

"There is the sword of the Son of Heaven, the sword of the feudal lord, and the sword of the commoner."

"What is the sword of the Son of Heaven like?" asked the king.

"The sword of the Son of Heaven? The Valley of Yan and the Stone Wall are its point; Qi and Dai its blade; Jin and Wey its spine; Zhou and Song its sword guard; Han and Wei its hilt.[3] The four barbarian tribes enwrap it; the four seasons enfold it; the seas of Bo surround it; the mountains of Chang girdle it. The five elements govern it; the demands of punishment and favor direct it. It is brought forth in accordance with the yin and yang, held in readiness in spring and summer, wielded in autumn and winter. Thrust it forward, and there is nothing that will stand before it; raise it on high, and there is nothing above it; press it down, and there is nothing beneath it; whirl it about, and there is nothing surrounding it. Above, it cleaves the drifting clouds; below, it severs the sinews of the earth. When this sword is once put to use, the feudal lords return to their former obedience, and the whole world submits. This is the sword of the Son of Heaven."

King Wen, dumbfounded, appeared to be at an utter loss. Then he said, "What is the sword of the feudal lord like?"

“The sword of the feudal lord? It has wise and brave men for its point, men of purity and integrity for its blade, men of worth and goodness for its spine, men of loyalty and sageliness for its sword guard, heroes and prodigies for its hilt. This sword too, thrust forward, meets nothing before it; raised, it encounters nothing above; pressed down, it encounters nothing beneath it; whirled about, it meets nothing surrounding it. Above, it takes its model from the roundness of heaven, following along with the three luminous bodies of the sky.[4] Below, it takes its model from the squareness of earth, following along with the four seasons. In the middle realm, it brings harmony to the wills of the people and peace to the four directions. This sword, once put into use, is like the crash of a thunderbolt: none within the four borders of the state will fail to bow down in submission; none will fail to heed and obey the commands of the ruler. This is the sword of the feudal lord.”

The king said, “What is the sword of the commoner like?”

“The sword of the commoner? It is used by men with tousled heads and bristling beards, with slouching caps tied with plain, coarse tassels and robes cut short behind, who glare fiercely and speak with great difficulty, who slash at one another in Your Majesty’s presence. Above, it lops off heads and necks; below, it splits open livers and lungs. Those who wield this sword of the commoner are no different from fighting cocks—any morning their lives may be cut off. They are of no use in the administration of the state.

“Now Your Majesty occupies the position of a Son of Heaven, and yet you show this fondness for the sword of the commoner.[5] If I may be so bold, I think it rather unworthy of you!

The king thereupon led Zhuangzi up into his hall, where the royal butler came forward with trays of food, but the king merely paced round and round the room.

“Your Majesty should seat yourself at ease and calm your spirits,” said Zhuangzi. “The affair of the sword is all over and finished!”

After this, King Wen did not emerge from his palace for three months, and his swordsmen all committed suicide in their quarters.

1. The title may also be interpreted to mean “Delighting in Swords.” Why both meanings are appropriate will become apparent.

2. The sentence is deliberately cryptic and capable of interpretation on a variety of levels.

3. These all are feudal states or strategic places of northern China surrounding the state of Zhao.

4. The stars collectively make up the third luminous body.

5. The state of Zhao, situated in north central China, was never very powerful, and its king, only one among many feudal rulers of the time, in no sense occupied anything that could be called “the position of a Son of Heaven.” If the writer has not abandoned all pretense at

historicity, he must mean that if the king of Zhao were to rule wisely, he might in time gain sufficient power and prestige to become a contender for the position of Son of Heaven.

31

THE OLD FISHERMAN

Confucius, after strolling through the Black Curtain Forest, sat down to rest on the Apricot Altar.[1] While his disciples turned to their books, he strummed his lute and sang. He had not gotten halfway through the piece he was playing when an old fisherman appeared, stepped out of his boat, and came forward. His beard and eyebrows were pure white; his hair hung down over his shoulders; and his sleeves flapped at his sides. He walked up the embankment, stopped when he reached the higher ground, rested his left hand on his knee, propped his chin with his right, and listened until the piece was ended. Then he beckoned to Zigong and Zilu, both of whom came forward at his call. The stranger pointed to Confucius and said, "What does he do?"

"He is a gentleman of Lu," replied Zilu.

The stranger then asked what family he belonged to, and Zilu replied, "The Kong family."

"This man of the Kong family," said the stranger, "what's his occupation?"

Zilu was still framing his reply when Zigong answered, "This man of the Kong family in his inborn nature adheres to loyalty and good faith, in his person practices benevolence and righteousness; he brings a beautiful order to rites and music and selects what is proper in human relationships. Above, he pays allegiance to the sovereign of the age; below, he transforms the ordinary people through education and, in this way, brings profit to the world. Such is the occupation of this man of the Kong family!"

"Does he have any territory that he rules over?" asked the stranger, pursuing the inquiry.

"No," said Zigong.

"Is he the counselor to some king or feudal lord?"

"No," said Zigong.

The stranger then laughed and turned to go, saying as he walked away, "As far as benevolence goes, he is benevolent all right. But I'm afraid he will not escape unharmed. To weary the mind and wear out the body, putting the Truth in peril like this—alas, I'm afraid he is separated from the Great Way by a vast distance indeed!"

Zigong returned and reported to Confucius what had happened. Confucius pushed aside his lute, rose to his feet, and said, "Perhaps this man is a sage!" Then he started down the embankment after him, reaching the edge of the lake just as the fisherman was about to take up his punting pole and drag his boat into the water. Glancing back and catching sight

of Confucius, he turned and stood facing him. Confucius hastily stepped back a few paces, bowed twice, and then came forward.

"What do you want?" asked the stranger.

"A moment ago, sir," said Confucius, "you made a few cryptic remarks and then left. Unworthy as I am, I'm afraid I do not understand what they mean. If I might be permitted to wait on you with all due humility and be favored with the sound of your august words, my ignorance might in time be remedied."

"Goodness!" exclaimed the stranger. "Your love of learning is great indeed!"[2]

Confucius bowed twice and then, straightening up, said, "Ever since childhood I have cultivated learning, until at last I have reached the age of sixty-nine. But I have never yet succeeded in hearing the Perfect Teaching. Dare I do anything, then, but wait with an open mind?"

"Creatures follow their own kind; a voice will answer to the voice that is like itself," said the stranger; "this has been the rule of Heaven since time began. With your permission, therefore, I will set aside for the moment my own ways and try applying myself to the things that you are concerned about.[3] What you are concerned about are the affairs of men. The Son of Heaven, the feudal lords, the high ministers, the common people—when these four are of themselves upright, this is the most admirable state of order. But if they depart from their proper stations, there is no greater disorder. When officials attend to their duties and men worry about their undertakings, there is no overstepping of the mark.

"Fields gone to waste, rooms unroofed, clothing and food that are not enough, taxes and labor services that you can't keep up with, wives and concubines never in harmony, senior and junior out of order—these are the worries of the common man. Ability that does not suffice for the task, official business that doesn't go right, conduct that is not spotless and pure, underlings who are lazy and slipshod, success and praise that never come your way, titles and stipends that you can't hold on to—these are the worries of the high minister. A court lacking in loyal ministers, a state and its great families in darkness and disorder, craftsmen and artisans who have no skill, articles of tribute that won't pass the test, inferior ranking at the spring and autumn levees at court, failure to ingratiate himself with the Son of Heaven—these are the worries of a feudal lord.

"The yin and yang out of harmony, cold and heat so untimely that they bring injury to all things, feudal lords violent and unruly, wantonly attacking one another till they all but destroy the common people, rites and music improperly performed, funds and resources that are forever giving out, human relationships that are not ordered as they should be, the hundred clans contumacious and depraved—these are the worries of the Son of Heaven and his chancellors. Now on the higher level, you do not hold the position of a ruler, a feudal lord, or a chancellor, and on the lower level, you have not been assigned to the office of a high minister with its tasks and duties. Yet you presume to 'bring a beautiful order to rites and music, to select what is proper in human relationships' and, in this way, to 'transform the ordinary people.' This is undertaking rather a lot, isn't it?

“Moreover, there are eight faults that men may possess, and four evils that beset their undertakings—you must not fail to examine these carefully. To do what it is not your business to do is called officiousness. To rush forward when no one has nodded in your direction is called obsequiousness. To echo a man’s opinions and try to draw him out in speech is called sycophancy. To speak without regard for what is right or wrong is called flattery. To delight in talking about other men’s failings is called calumny. To break up friendships and set kinfolk at odds is called maliciousness. To praise falsely and hypocritically so as to cause injury and evil to others is called wickedness. Without thought for right or wrong, to try to face in two directions at once so as to steal a glimpse of the other party’s wishes is called treachery. These eight faults inflict chaos on others and injury on the possessor. A gentleman will not befriend the man who possesses them; an enlightened ruler will not have him for his minister.

“As for the four evils that I spoke of, to be fond of plunging into great undertakings, altering and departing from the old accepted ways, hoping thereby to enhance your merit and fame—this is called avidity. To insist that you know it all, that everything be done your way, snatching from others and appropriating for your own use—this is called avarice. To see your errors but refuse to change, to listen to remonstrance but go on behaving worse than before—this is called obstinacy. When men agree with you, to commend them; when they disagree with you, to refuse to see any goodness in them even when it is there—this is called bigotry. These are the four evils. If you do away with the eight faults and avoid committing the four evils, then and only then will you become capable of being taught!”

Confucius looked chagrined and gave a sigh. Then he bowed twice, straightened up, and said, “Twice I have been exiled from Lu; they wiped away my footprints in Wei, chopped down a tree on me in Song, and besieged me between Chen and Cai. I am aware of no error of my own, and yet why did I fall victim to these four persecutions?”

A pained expression came over the stranger’s face and he said, “How hard it is to make you understand! Once there was a man who was afraid of his shadow and who hated his footprints, and so he tried to get way from them by running. But the more he lifted his feet and put them down again, the more footprints he made. And no matter how fast he ran, his shadow never left him, and so, thinking that he was still going too slowly, he ran faster and faster without a stop until his strength gave out and he fell down dead. He didn’t understand that by lolling in the shade he could have gotten rid of his shadow and that by resting in quietude he could have put an end to his footprints. How could he have been so stupid!

“Now you scrutinize the realm of benevolence and righteousness, examine the borders of sameness and difference, observe the alternations of stillness and movement, lay down the rules for giving and receiving, regulate the emotions of love and hate, harmonize the seasons of joy and anger—and yet you barely manage to escape harm. If you were diligent in improving yourself, careful to hold fast to the Truth, and would hand over external things to other men, you could avoid these entanglements. But now, without improving yourself, you make demands on others—that is surely no way to go about the thing, is it?”

Confucius looked shamefaced and said, “Please, may I ask what you mean by ‘the Truth’?”

The stranger said, “By ‘the Truth’ I mean purity and sincerity in their highest degree. He who lacks purity and sincerity cannot move others. Therefore he who forces himself to lament, though he may sound sad, will awaken no grief. He who forces himself to be angry, though he may sound fierce, will arouse no awe. And he who forces himself to be affectionate, though he may smile, will create no air of harmony. True sadness need make no sound to awaken grief; true anger need not show itself to arouse awe; true affection need not smile to create harmony. When a man has the Truth within himself, his spirit may move among external things. That is why the Truth is to be prized!

“It may be applied to human relationships in the following ways: In the service of parents, it is love and filial piety; in the service of the ruler, it is loyalty and integrity; in festive wine drinking, it is merriment and joy; in periods of mourning, it is sadness and grief. In loyalty and integrity, service is the important thing; in festive drinking, merriment is the important thing; in periods of mourning, grief is the important thing; in the service of parents, their comfort is the important thing. In seeking to perform the finest kind of service, one does not always try to go about it in the same way. In ensuring comfort in the serving of one’s parents, one does not question the means to be employed. In seeking the merriment that comes with festive drinking, one does not fuss over what cups and dishes are to be selected. In expressing the grief that is appropriate to periods of mourning, one does not quibble over the exact ritual to be followed.

“Rites are something created by the vulgar men of the world; the Truth is that which is received from Heaven. By nature it is the way it is and cannot be changed. Therefore the sage patterns himself on Heaven, prizes the Truth, and does not allow himself to be cramped by the vulgar. The stupid man does the opposite of this. He is unable to pattern himself on Heaven and instead frets over human concerns. He does not know enough to prize the Truth, but instead, plodding along with the crowd, he allows himself to be changed by vulgar ways and so is never content. Alas, that you fell into the slough of human hypocrisy at such an early age and have been so late in hearing of the Great Way! “

Confucius once more bowed twice, straightened up, and said, “Now that I have succeeded in meeting you, it would seem as though Heaven has blessed me. If, Master, you would not consider it a disgrace for one like myself to enter the ranks of those who wait on you, and to be taught by you in person, then may I be so bold as to inquire where your lodgings are? I would like to be allowed to go there, receive instruction, and at last learn the Great Way!”

The stranger replied, “I have heard it said, If it is someone you can go with, then go with him to the very end of the mysterious Way; but if it is someone you cannot go with, someone who does not understand the Way, then take care and have nothing to do with him —only then may you avoid danger to yourself. Keep working at it! Now I will leave you, I will leave you.” So saying, he poled away in his boat, threading a path through the reeds.

Yan Yuan brought the carriage around; Zilu held out the strap for pulling oneself up, but Confucius, without turning in their direction, waited until the ripples on the water were stilled and he could no longer hear the sound of the pole before he ventured to mount.

Zilu, following by the side of the carriage, said, “I have been permitted to serve you for a long time, Master, but I have never seen you encounter anyone who filled you with such

awe. The rulers of ten thousand chariots, the lords of a thousand chariots, when they receive you, invariably seat you on the same level as themselves and treat you with the etiquette due to an equal, and still you maintain a stiff and haughty air. But now this old fisherman, pole in hand, presents himself in front of you, and you double up at the waist, as bent as a chiming stone,[4] and bow every time you reply to his words—this is going too far, isn't it? Your disciples all are wondering about it. Why should a fisherman deserve such treatment?"

Confucius leaned forward on the crossbar, sighed, and said, "You certainly are hard to change! All this time you have been immersed in the study of ritual principles, and you still haven't gotten rid of your mean and servile ways of thinking. Come closer, and I will explain to you. To meet an elder and fail to treat him with respect is a breach of etiquette. To see a worthy man and fail to honor him is to lack benevolence. If the fisherman were not a Perfect Man, he would not be able to make other men humble themselves before him. And if men, in humbling themselves before him, lack purity of intention, then they will never attain the Truth. As a result, they will go on forever bringing injury on themselves. Alas! There is no greater misfortune than for a man to lack benevolence. And yet you alone dare to invite such misfortune!

"Moreover, the Way is the path by which the ten thousand things proceed. All things that lose it, die; all that get it, live. To go against it in one's undertakings is to fail; to comply with it is to succeed. Hence, wherever the Way is to be found, the sage will pay homage there. As far as the Way is concerned, this old fisherman may certainly be said to possess it. How, then, would I dare fail to show respect to him!"

1. The word "altar" here refers to a mesa or flat-topped hill rising out of the lowland.

2. A jocular reference to Confucius's remark that in any village of ten houses, one might find a person as loyal and true to his word as he, but none with such a great love of learning. *Analects* V, 27.

3. Another possible interpretation would be, "I will explain my own ways and try applying them to the things," etc.

4. Chiming stones were shaped like an inverted "V."

32

LIE YUKOU

Lie Yukou was going to Qi, but halfway there he turned around and came home. By chance he met Bohun Wuren. “What made you turn around and come back?” asked Bohun Wuren.

“I was scared.”

“Why were you scared?”

“I stopped to eat at ten soup stalls along the way, and at five of them they served me soup ahead of everybody else!”

“What was so scary about that?” said Bohun Wuren.

“If you can’t dispel the sincerity inside you, it oozes[1] out of the body and forms a radiance that, once outside, overpowers men’s minds and makes them careless of how they treat their own superiors and old people. And it’s from this kind of confusion that trouble comes. The soup sellers have nothing but their broths to peddle, and their margin of gain can’t be very large.[2] If people with such skimpy profits and so little power still treat me like this, then what would it be like with the ruler of Qi, the lord of a state of ten thousand chariots? Body wearied by the burden of such a state, wisdom exhausted in its administration, he would want to shift his affairs onto me and make me work out some solution—that was what scared me!”

“You sized it up very well,” said Bohun Wuren. “But even if you stay at home, people are going to flock around you.”

Not long afterward, Bohun Wuren went to Liezi’s house and found the area outside his door littered with shoes.[3] He stood gazing north, staff held straight up, chin wrinkled where it rested on it. After standing there a while, he went away without a word. The servant in charge of receiving guests went in and reported this to Liezi. Liezi snatched up his shoes and ran barefoot after him, overtaking him at the gate. “Now that you’ve come all this way, don’t you have any ‘medicine’ to give me?”[4]

“It’s no use. I told you from the beginning that people would come flocking around you, and here they are flocking around you. It’s not that you’re able to make them come to you—it’s that you’re unable to keep them from coming. But what good is it to you? If you move other people and make them happy, you must be showing them something unusual in yourself. And if you move others, you invariably upset your own basic nature, in which case there’s nothing more to be said. These men you wander around with—none will give you any good advice. All they have are petty words, the kind that poison a man. No one understands, no one comprehends—so who can give any help to anyone else? The clever

man wears himself out, the wise man worries. But the man of no ability has nothing he seeks. He eats his fill and wanders idly about. Drifting like an unmoored boat, emptily and idly he wanders along."

There was a man from Zheng named Huan who, after three years of reciting and memorizing texts at a place called Qiushi, finally became a Confucian scholar. As the Yellow River spreads its moisture for nine *li* along its banks, so Huan's affluence spread to his three sets of relatives. He saw to it that his younger brother Di became a Mohist, and the Confucian and the Mohist debated with each other, but their father always took sides with the younger brother. Ten years of this, and Huan committed suicide. Appearing to his father in a dream, he said, "It was *I* who made it possible for your son to become a Mohist. Why don't you try taking a look at my grave—I have become the berries on the catalpa and the cypress there!"[5]

When the Creator rewards a man, he does not reward what is man-made in the man but what is Heaven-made. It was what was in the younger brother that made him a Mohist. Yet there are those like Huan who think they are different from others and even despise their own kin. Like men from Qi drinking at a well, they try to elbow one another away.[6] So it is said, In the world today, we have nothing but Huans—they all think that they alone are right. But the man who truly possesses Virtue is not even aware of it, much less the man who possesses the Way. In ancient times it was said of men like Huan that they had committed the crime of hiding from Heaven.

The sage rests where there is rest and does not try to rest where there is no rest. The common run of men try to rest where there is no rest and do not rest where rest is to be found.

Zhuangzi said, To know the Way is easy; to keep from speaking about it is hard. To know and not to speak—this gets you to the Heavenly part. To know and to speak—this gets you to the human part. Men in the old days looked out for the Heavenly, not the human.

Zhuping Man studied the art of butchering dragons under Crippled Yi. It cost him all the thousand pieces of gold he had in his house, and after three years he'd mastered the art, but there was no one who could use his services.

The sage looks at the inevitable and decides that it is not inevitable—therefore he has no recourse to arms. The common man looks at what is not inevitable and decides that it is inevitable—therefore he has frequent recourse to arms. He who turns to arms is always seeking something. He who trusts to arms is lost.

The understanding of the little man never gets beyond gifts and wrappings, letters and calling cards. He wastes his spirit on the shallow and trivial and yet wants to be the savior of both the world and the Way, to blend both form and emptiness in the Great Unity. Such a man will blunder and go astray in time and space; his body entangled, he will never come to know the Great Beginning. But he who is a Perfect Man lets his spirit return to the Beginningless, to lie down in pleasant slumber in the Village of Not-Anything-at-All; like water he flows through the Formless or trickles forth from the Great Purity. How pitiful—

you whose understanding can be encompassed in a hair tip, who know nothing of the Great Tranquillity!

A man of Song, one Cao Shang, was sent by the king of Song as envoy to the state of Qin. On his departure, he was assigned no more than four or five carriages, but the king of Qin, greatly taken with him, bestowed on him an additional hundred carriages. When he returned to Song, he went to see Zhuangzi and said, "Living in poor alleyways and cramped lanes, skimping, starving, weaving one's own sandals, with withered neck and sallow face—that sort of thing I'm no good at. But winning instant recognition from the ruler of a state of ten thousand chariots and returning with a hundred of them in one's retinue—that's where I excel!"

Zhuangzi said, "When the king of Qin falls ill, he calls for his doctors. The doctor who lances a boil or drains an abscess receives one carriage in payment, but the one who licks his piles for him gets five carriages. The lower down the area to be treated, the larger the number of carriages. From the large number of carriages you've got, I take it you must have been treating his piles. Get out!"

Duke Ai of Lu said to Yan He, "If I were to make Confucius my pillar and stanchion, do you think it would improve the health of the state?"

"Beware—that way lies danger! Confucius will deck things out in feathers and paint and conduct his affairs with flowery phrases, mistaking side issues for the crux. He is willing to distort his inborn nature in order to make himself a model for the people, not even realizing that he is acting in bad faith. He takes everything to heart, submits all to the judgment of the spirit—how could such a man be worth putting in charge of the people? Does he meet with your approval? Would you like to provide for his support? It would be a mistake, but you may do it if you like. Yet one who would induce the people to turn their backs on reality and study hypocrisy is hardly fit to be made a model for the people. If we are to take thought for later ages, it would be best to drop the scheme.

"Governing is a difficult thing. To dispense favors to men without ever forgetting that you are doing so—this is not Heaven's way of giving. Even merchants and peddlers are unwilling to be ranked with such a person; and although their occupations may seem to rank them with him, in their hearts they will never acquiesce to such a ranking.[7] External punishments are administered by implements of metal and wood; internal punishments are inflicted by frenzy and excess. When the petty man meets with external punishments, the implements of metal and wood bear down on him; when he incurs internal punishment, the yin and yang eat him up.[8] To escape both external and internal punishment—only the True Man is capable of this."

Confucius said, "The mind of man is more perilous than mountains or rivers, harder to understand than Heaven. Heaven at least has its fixed times of spring and fall, winter and summer, daybreak and dusk. But man is thick-skinned and hides his true form deep within. Thus he may have an earnest face and yet be supercilious; he may seem to have superior qualities and yet be worthless. He may appear to be going about things in a scatterbrained

way and yet know exactly what he is doing. Seeming to be firm, he may in fact be lax; seeming to be mild, he may in fact be ruthless. Therefore those who flock to righteousness like thirsty men to water may later flee from it as though from fire.

"For this reason the gentleman will employ a man on a distant mission and observe his degree of loyalty, will employ him close at hand and observe his degree of respect. He will hand him troublesome affairs and observe how well he manages them, will suddenly ask his advice and observe how wisely he answers. He will exact some difficult promise from him and see how well he keeps it, turn over funds to him and see with what benevolence he dispenses them, inform him of the danger he is in and note how faithful he is to his duties. He will get him drunk with wine and observe how well he handles himself, place him in mixed company and see what effect beauty has on him. By applying these nine tests, you may determine who is the unworthy man."

Zheng Kaofu—when he received his first appointment to office, he bowed his head; when he received his second appointment, he bent his back; when he received his third appointment, he hunched far over; hugging the wall, he scurried along.[9] Who would dare to ignore his example? But the ordinary man—on receiving his first appointment, he begins to strut; on receiving his second appointment, he does a dance in his carriage; on receiving his third appointment, he addresses his father's brothers by their personal names. What a difference from the ways of Yao and Xu You!

There is no greater evil than for the mind to be aware of virtue and to act as though it were a pair of eyes. For when it starts acting like a pair of eyes, it will peer out from within, and when it peers out from within, it is ruined. There are five types of dangerous virtue, of which inner virtue is the worst.[10] What do I mean by inner virtue? He who possesses inner virtue thinks himself always in the right and denigrates those who do not do as he does. There are eight extremes that bring a man trouble, three conditions necessary for advancement, and six respositories of punishment.[11] Beauty, a fine beard, a tall stature, brawn, strength, style, bravery, decisiveness—when a man has all these to a degree that surpasses others, they bring him trouble. Tagging along with things, bobbing and weaving, cringing and fawning—if a man can do all three of these in a way that others do not, then he will succeed in advancing. Wisdom and knowledge, and the outward recognition they involve; bravery and decisiveness, and the numerous resentments they arouse; benevolence and righteousness, and all the responsibilities they involve—these six are what bring you punishment.[12] He who has mastered the true form of life is a giant; he who has mastered understanding is petty. He who has mastered the Great Fate follows along; he who has mastered the little fates must take what happens to come his way.[13]

There was a man who had an audience with the king of Song and received from him a gift of ten carriages. With his ten carriages, he went bragging and strutting to Zhuangzi. Zhuangzi said, "There's a poor family down by the river who make their living by weaving articles out of mugwort. The son was diving in the deepest part of the river and came upon a pearl worth a thousand pieces of gold. His father said to him, 'Bring a rock and smash it

to bits! A pearl worth a thousand in gold could only have come from under the chin of the Black Dragon who lives at the bottom of the ninefold deeps. To be able to get the pearl, you must have happened along when he was asleep. If the Black Dragon had been awake, do you think there'd have been so much as a shred of you left?' Now the state of Song is deeper than the ninefold deeps, and the king of Song more truculent than the Black Dragon. In order to get these carriages, you must have happened along when he was asleep. If the king of Song had been awake, you'd have ended up in little pieces!"

Someone sent gifts to Zhuangzi with an invitation to office. Zhuangzi replied to the messenger in these words: "Have you ever seen a sacrificial ox? They deck him out in embroidery and trimmings, gorge him on grass and beanstalks. But when at last they lead him off into the great ancestral temple, then, although he might wish he could become a lonely calf once more, is it possible?"

When Zhuangzi was about to die, his disciples expressed a desire to give him a sumptuous burial. Zhuangzi said, "I will have heaven and earth for my coffin and coffin shell, the sun and moon for my pair of jade disks, the stars and constellations for my pearls and beads, and the ten thousand things for my parting gifts. The furnishings for my funeral are already prepared—what is there to add?"

"But we're afraid the crows and kites will eat you, Master!" said his disciples.

Zhuangzi said, "Above ground, I'll be eaten by crows and kites; below ground, I'll be eaten by mole crickets and ants. Wouldn't it be rather bigoted to deprive one group in order to supply the other?

"If you use unfairness to achieve fairness, your fairness will be unfair. If you use a lack of proof to establish proofs, your proofs will be proofless. The bright-eyed man is no more than the servant of things, but the man of spirit knows how to find real proofs. The bright-eyed is no match for the man of spirit—from long ago this has been the case. Yet the fool trusts to what he can see and immerses himself in the human. All his accomplishments are beside the point—pitiful, isn't it!"

1. Following Sun Yirang's emendation.

2. Supplying a negative from the parallel passage in *Liezi*, sec. 2.

3. Chinese at this time sat on mats on the floor; consequently they removed their shoes before stepping up into a house.

4. That is, good advice.

5. Is the fact that he has changed into berries an indication of unappeased anger that will not let him rest in his grave, or has it some other significance? I do not know.

6. The story to which this refers is unknown.

7. Meaning very doubtful.

8. An upset in the balance of the yin and yang within the body will bring on a consuming sickness; see p. 26, n. 9.

9. Zheng Kaofu, "The Upright Ancestor," was a forebear of Confucius who served at the court of Song in the eighth century BCE. The three appointments represent three advancements in court rank. According to *Zhuozhuan*, *Zhao* seventh year, the passage describing him here was part of the inscription on a bronze vessel used in his mortuary temple.

10. The writer nowhere states what the other four types are.

11. Following Xi Tong, I read *xing* to mean "punishment."

12. The end of this sentence has dropped out of most texts.

13. There would seem to be a play on the various meanings of *ming*—"appointment," "fate," "command," etc.; see p. 28, n. 12. Some commentators take it to mean "life span."

33

THE WORLD

Many are the men in the world who apply themselves to doctrines and policies, and each believes he has something that cannot be improved on. What in ancient times was called the “art of the Way’—where does it exist? I say, there is no place it does not exist. But, you ask, where does holiness descend from, where does enlightenment emerge from? The sage gives them birth, the king completes them, and all have their source in the One. He who does not depart from the Ancestor is called the Heavenly Man; he who does not depart from the Pure is called the Holy Man; he who does not depart from the True is called the Perfect Man.

To make Heaven his source, Virtue his root, and the Way his gate, revealing himself through change and transformation—one who does this is called a Sage.

To make benevolence his standard of kindness, righteousness his model of reason, ritual his guide to conduct, and music his source of harmony, serene in mercy and benevolence—one who does this is called a gentleman.

To employ laws to determine functions, names to indicate rank, comparisons to discover actual performance, investigations to arrive at decisions, checking them off, one, two, three, four, and in this way to assign the hundred officials to their ranks; to keep a constant eye on administrative affairs, give first thought to food and clothing, keep in mind the need to produce and grow, to shepherd and store away, to provide for the old and the weak, the orphan and the widow, so that all are properly nourished—these are the principles by which the people are ordered.[1]

How thorough were the men of ancient times!—companions of holiness and enlightenment, pure as Heaven and earth, caretakers of the ten thousand things, harmonizers of the world, their bounty extended to the hundred clans. They had a clear understanding of basic policies and paid attention even to petty regulations—in the six avenues and the four frontiers, in what was great or small, coarse or fine, there was no place they did not move.

The wisdom that was embodied in their policies and regulations is, in many cases, still reflected in the old laws and records of the historiographers handed down over the ages. As to that which is recorded in the *Book of Odes* and *Book of Documents*, the *Ritual* and the *Music*, there are many gentlemen of Zou and Lu, scholars of sash and official rank, who have an understanding of it. The *Book of Odes* describes the will; the *Book of Documents* describes events; the *Ritual* speaks of conduct; the *Music* speaks of harmony; the *Book of*

Changes describes the yin and yang; the *Spring and Autumn Annals* describes titles and functions.[2]

These various policies are scattered throughout the world and are propounded in the Middle Kingdom, the scholars of the hundred schools from time to time taking up one or the other in their praises and preachings. But the world is in great disorder, the worthies and sages lack clarity of vision, and the Way and its Virtue are no longer One. So the world too often seizes on one of its aspects, examines it, and pronounces it good. But it is like the case of the ear, the eye, the nose, and the mouth: each has its own kind of understanding, but their functions are not interchangeable. In the same way, the various skills of the hundred schools all have their strong points, and at times each may be of use. But none is wholly sufficient, none is universal. The scholar cramped in one corner of learning tries to judge the beauty of Heaven and earth, to pry into the principles of the ten thousand things, to scrutinize the perfection of the ancients, but seldom is he able to encompass the true beauty of Heaven and earth, to describe the true face of holy brightness. Therefore the Way that is sagely within and kingly without has fallen into darkness and is no longer clearly perceived, has become shrouded and no longer shines forth. The men of the world all follow their own desires and make these their "doctrine." How sad!—the hundred schools going on and on instead of turning back, fated never to join again. The scholars of later ages have unfortunately never perceived the purity of Heaven and earth, the great body of the ancients, and "the art of the Way" in time comes to be rent and torn apart by the world.

To teach no extravagance to later ages, to leave the ten thousand things unadorned, to shun any glorification of rules and regulations, instead applying ink and measuring line to the correction of one's own conduct, thus aiding the world in time of crisis—there were those in ancient times who believed that the "art of the Way" lay in these things. Mo Di and Qin Guli heard of their views and delighted in them, but they followed them to excess and were too assiduous in applying them to themselves.

Mozi wrote a piece "Against Music," and another entitled "Moderation in Expenditure," declaring there was to be no singing in life, no mourning in death.[3] With a boundless love and a desire to ensure universal benefit, he condemned warfare, and there was no place in his teachings for anger. Again, he was fond of learning and broad in knowledge and, in this respect, did not differ from others. His views, however, were not always in accordance with those of the former kings, for he denounced the rites and music of antiquity. The Yellow Emperor had his Xianchi music, Yao his Dazhong, Shun his Dashao, Yu his Daxia, Tang his Dahuo, and King Wen the music of the Biyong, while King Wu and the Duke of Zhou fashioned the Wu music. The mourning rites of antiquity prescribed the ceremonies appropriate for eminent and humble, the different regulations for superior and inferior. The inner and outer coffins of the Son of Heaven were to consist of seven layers; those of the feudal lords, five layers; those of the high ministers, three layers; those of the officials, two layers. Yet Mozi alone declares there is to be no singing in life, no mourning in death. A coffin of paulownia wood three inches thick, with no outer shell—this is his rule, his ideal. If he teaches men in this fashion, then I fear he has no love for them; and if he adopts such

practices for his own burial, then he surely has no love for himself! I do not mean to discredit his teachings entirely; and yet men want to sing, and he says, “No singing!”; they want to wail, and he says, “No wailing!”—one wonders if he is in fact human at all. A life that is all toil, a death shoddily disposed of—it is a way that goes too much against us. To make men anxious, to make them sorrowful—such practices are hard to carry out, and I fear they cannot be regarded as the Way of the Sage. They are contrary to the hearts of the world, and the world cannot endure them. Though Mozi himself may be capable of such endurance, how can the rest of the world do likewise? Departing so far from the ways of the world, they must be far removed indeed from those of the true king.

Mozi defends his teachings by saying, “In ancient times, when Yu dammed the flood waters and opened up the courses of the Yangtze and the Yellow River so that they flowed through the lands of the four barbarians and the nine provinces, joining with the three hundred famous rivers,[4] their three thousand tributaries, and the little streams too numerous to count—at that time Yu in person carried the basket and wielded the spade, gathering together and mingling the rivers of the world till there was no down left on his calves, no hair on his shins; the drenching rains washed his locks, the sharp winds combed them while he worked to establish the ten thousand states. Yu was a great sage, yet with his own body he labored for the world in such fashion!” So it is that many of the Mohists of later ages dress in skins and coarse cloth, wear wooden clogs or hempen sandals, never resting day or night, driving themselves on to the most bitter exertions. “If we cannot do the same,” they say, “then we are not following the way of Yu, and are unworthy to be called Mohists!”

The disciples of Xiangli Qin, the followers of Wu Hou, and the Mohists of the south such as Ku Huo, Ji Chi, Deng Lingzi, and their like all recite the Mohist canon, and yet they quarrel and disagree in their interpretations, calling one another “Mohist factionalists.” In their discussions of “hard” and “white,” “difference” and “sameness,” they attack back and forth; in their disquisitions on the incompatibility of “odd” and “even,” they exchange volleys of refutation.[5] They regard the Grand Master of their sect as a sage, each sect trying to make its Grand Master the recognized head of the school in hopes that his authority will be acknowledged by later ages, but down to the present the dispute remains unresolved.[6]

Mo Di and Qin Guli were right in their ideas but wrong in their practices, with the result that the Mohists of later ages have felt obliged to subject themselves to hardship “till there is no down left on their calves, no hair on their shins”—their only thought being to outdo one another. Such efforts represent the height of confusion, the lowest degree of order. Nevertheless, Mozi was one who had a true love for the world. He failed to achieve all he aimed for, yet, wasted and worn with exhaustion, he never ceased trying. He was indeed a gentleman of ability!

To be unsnared by vulgar ways, to make no vain show of material things, to bring no hardship on others,[7] to avoid offending the mob, to seek peace and security for the world, preservation of the people’s lives, full provender for others as well as oneself, and to rest

content when these aims are fulfilled, in this way bringing purity to the heart—there were those in ancient times who believed that the "art of the Way" lay in these things. Song Jian[8] and Yin Wen heard of their views and delighted in them. They fashioned caps in the shape of Mount Hua to be their mark of distinction.[9] In dealing with the ten thousand things, they took the "defining of boundaries" to be their starting point;[10] they preached liberality of mind,[11] which they called "the mind's activity," hoping thereby to bring men together in the joy of harmony, to ensure concord within the four seas. Their chief task lay, they felt, in the effort to establish these ideals. They regarded it as no shame to suffer insult but sought to put an end to strife among the people, to outlaw aggression, to abolish the use of arms, and to rescue the world from warfare. With these aims they walked the whole world over, trying to persuade those above them and to teach those below, and though the world refused to listen, they clamored all the louder and would not give up until men said, "High and low are sick of the sight of them, and still they demand to be seen!"

Nevertheless, they took too much thought for others and too little for themselves. "Just give us five pints of rice and that will be enough," they said, though at that rate I fear these teachers did not get their fill. Though their own disciples went hungry, however, they never forgot the rest of the world but continued day and night without stop, saying, "We are determined to make certain that all men can live!" How lofty their aims, these saviors of the world! Again they said, "The gentleman does not examine others with too harsh an eye; he does not need material things in which to dress himself." If a particular line of inquiry seemed to bring no benefit to the world, they thought it better to abandon it than to seek an understanding of it. To outlaw aggression and abolish the use of arms—these were their external aims. To lessen the desires and weaken the emotions—these were their internal aims. Whether their approach was large scaled or small, detailed or gross, these were the goals they sought—these and nothing more.

* * *

Public-spirited and not partisan, even-minded and not given to favoritism, vacant eyed, with none for a master, trailing after things without a second thought, giving not a glance to schemes, not a moment of speculation to knowledge, choosing neither this thing nor that, but going along with all of them—there were those in ancient times who believed that the "art of the Way" lay in such things. Peng Meng, Tian Pian, and Shen Dao heard of their views and delighted in them.[12] The Way, they believed, lay in making the ten thousand things equal.[13] "Heaven is capable of sheltering but not of bearing up," they said. "Earth is capable of bearing up but not of sheltering. The Great Way is capable of embracing all things but not of discriminating among them."[14] From this they deduced that each of the ten thousand things has that which is acceptable in it and that which is not acceptable. Therefore they said, "To choose is to forgo universality; to compare things[15] is to fail to reach the goal. The Way has nothing that is left out of it."

For this reason, Shen Dao discarded knowledge, did away with self, followed what he could not help but follow, acquiescent and unmeddling where things were concerned,

taking this to be the principle of the Way. “To know is not to know,” he said, and so he despised knowledge and worked to destroy and slough it off. Listless and lackadaisical,[16] he accepted no responsibilities but laughed at the world for honoring worthy men. Casual and un-inhibited, he did nothing to distinguish himself but disparaged the great sages of the world. Lopping off corners, chiseling away the rough places, he went tumbling and turning along with things. He put aside both right and wrong and somehow managed to stay out of trouble. With nothing to learn from knowledge or scheming, no comprehension of what comes before or after, he merely rested where he was, and that was all. Pushed, he would finally begin to move; dragged, he would at last start on his way. He revolved like a whirlwind, spun like a feather, went round and round like a grindstone, keeping himself whole and free from condemnation. Without error, whether in motion or at rest, never once was he guilty of any fault. Why was this? Because a creature that is without knowledge does not face the perils that come from trying to set oneself up, the entanglements that come from relying on knowledge. In motion or in stillness, he never departs from reason—in this way he lives out his years without winning praise. Therefore Shen Dao said, “Let me become like those creatures without knowledge, that is enough.[17] Such creatures have no use for the worthies or the sages. Clod-like, they never lose the Way.” The great and eminent men would get together and laugh at him, saying, “The teachings of Shen Dao are not rules for the living but ideals for a dead man. No wonder he is looked on as peculiar!”

Tian Pian was a similar case. He studied under Peng Meng and learned what it means not to compare things. Peng Meng’s teacher used to say, “In ancient times the men of the Way reached the point where they regarded nothing as right and nothing as wrong—that was all.” But such ways are mute and muffled—how can they be captured in words? Peng Meng and Tian Pian always went contrary to other men and were seldom heeded. They could not seem to avoid lopping away at the corners. What they called the Way was not the true Way, and when they said a thing was right, they could not avoid raising the possibility that it might be wrong.[18] Peng Meng, Tian Pian, and Shen Dao did not really understand the Way, though all had at one time heard something of what it was like.

To regard the source as pure and the things that emerge from it as coarse, to look on accumulation as insufficiency; dwelling alone, peaceful and placid, in spiritual brightness there were those in ancient times who believed that the “art of the Way” lay in these things. The Barrier Keeper Yin and Lao Dan heard of their views and delighted in them.[19] They expounded them in terms of constant non-being and being and headed their doctrine with the concept of the Great Unity. Gentle weakness and humble self-effacement are its outer marks; emptiness, void, and the noninjury of the ten thousand things are its essence.

The Barrier Keeper Yin said, “When a man does not dwell in self, then things will of themselves reveal their forms to him. His movement is like that of water, his stillness like that of a mirror, his responses like those of an echo. Blank eyed, he seems to be lost; motionless, he has the limpidity of water. Because he is one with it, he achieves harmony; should he reach out for it, he would lose it. Never does he go ahead of other men, but always follows in their wake.”

Lao Dan said, “Know the male but cling to the female; become the ravine of the world. Know the pure but cling to dishonor; become the valley of the world.”[20] Others all grasp what is in front; he alone grasped what is behind. He said, “Take to yourself the filth of the world.” Others all grasp what is full; he alone grasped what is empty. He never stored away—therefore he had more than enough; he had heaps and heaps of more than enough! In his movement, he was easygoing and did not wear himself out. Dwelling in inaction, he scoffed at skill. Others all seek good fortune; he alone kept himself whole by becoming twisted. He said, “Let us somehow or other avoid incurring blame!” He took profundity to be the root and frugality to be the guideline. He said, “What is brittle will be broken, what is sharp will be blunted.” He was always generous and permissive with things and inflicted no pain on others—this may be called the highest achievement.

The Barrier Keeper Yin and Lao Dan—with their breadth and stature, they indeed were the True Men of old!

Blank, boundless, and without form; transforming, changing, never constant. Are we dead? Are we alive? Do we stand side by side with Heaven and earth? Do we move in the company of spiritual brightness? Absentminded, where are we going? Forgetful, where are we headed for? The ten thousand things ranged all around us; not one of them is worthy to be singled out as our destination—there were those in ancient times who believed that the “art of the Way” lay in these things. Zhuang Zhou heard of their views and delighted in them. He expounded them in odd and outlandish terms, in brash and bombastic language, in unbound and unbordered phrases, abandoning himself to the times without partisanship, not looking at things from one angle only. He believed that the world was drowned in turbidness and that it was impossible to address it in sober language. So he used “goblet words” to pour out endless changes, “repeated words” to give a ring of truth, and “imputed words” to impart greater breadth. He came and went alone with the pure spirit of Heaven and earth, yet he did not view the ten thousand things with arrogant eyes. He did not scold over “right” and “wrong” but lived with the age and its vulgarity. Though his writings are a string of queer beads and baubles, they roll and rattle and do no one any harm.[21] Though his words seem to be at sixes and sevens, yet among the sham and waggery, there are things worth observing, for they are crammed with truths that never come to an end.

Above he wandered with the Creator, below he made friends with those who have gotten outside life and death, who know nothing of beginning or end. As for the Source, his grasp of it was broad, expansive, and penetrating; profound, liberal, and unimpeded. As for the Ancestor, he may be said to have tuned and accommodated himself to it and to have risen on it to the greatest heights. Nevertheless, in responding to change and expounding on the world of things, he set forth principles that will never cease to be valid, an approach that can never be shuffled off. Veiled and arcane, he is one who has never been completely comprehended.

* * *

Hui Shi was a man of many devices, and his writings would fill five carriages. But his doctrines were jumbled and perverse, and his words wide of the mark. His way of dealing

with things may be seen from these sayings:

> The largest thing has nothing beyond it; it is called the One of largeness. The smallest thing has nothing within it; it is called the One of smallness.
> That which has no thickness cannot be piled up; yet it is a thousand *li* in dimension.
> Heaven is as low as earth; mountains and marshes are on the same level.
> The sun at noon is the sun setting. The thing born is the thing dying.
> Great similarities are different from little similarities; these are called the little similarities and differences. The ten thousand things all are similar and all are different; these are called the great similarities and differences.
> The southern region has no limit and yet has a limit.
> I set off for Yue today and came there yesterday.[22]
> Linked rings can be separated.
> I know the center of the world: it is north of Yan and south of Yue.[23]
> Let love embrace the ten thousand things; Heaven and earth are a single body.

With sayings such as these, Hui Shi tried to introduce a more magnanimous view of the world and to enlighten the rhetoricians. The rhetoricians of the world happily joined in with the following sayings:

> An egg has feathers.
> A chicken has three legs.[24]
> Ying contains the whole world.[25]
> A dog can be considered a sheep.
> Horses lay eggs.
> Toads have tails.
> Fire is not hot.[26]
> Mountains come out of the mouth.[27]
> Wheels never touch the ground.
> Eyes do not see.
> Pointing to it never gets to it; if it got to it, there would be no separation.[28]
> The tortoise is longer than the snake.
> T squares are not right angled; compasses cannot make circles.
> Holes for chisel handles do not surround the handles.
> The flying bird's shadow never moves.
> No matter how swift the barbed arrow, there are times when it is neither moving nor at rest.
> A dog is not a canine.
> A yellow horse and a black cow make three.
> White dogs are black.
> The orphan colt never had a mother.

> Take a pole one foot long, cut away half of it every day, and at the end of ten thousand generations, there will still be some left.

Such were the sayings that the rhetoricians used in answer to Hui Shi, rambling on without stop till the end of their days. Huan Duan and Gongsun Long were among such rhetoricians.[29] Dazzling men's minds, unsettling their views, they could outdo others in talking but could not make them submit in their minds—such were the limitations of the rhetoricians.

Hui Shi, day after day, used all the knowledge he had in his debates with others, deliberately thinking up ways to astonish the rhetoricians of the world—the preceding examples illustrate this. Nevertheless, Hui Shi's manner of speaking showed that he considered himself the ablest man alive. "Heaven and earth—perhaps they are greater!" he used to declare. All he knew how to do was play the hero; he had no real art.

In the south there was an eccentric named Huang Liao who asked why Heaven and earth do not collapse and crumble or what makes the wind and rain, the thunder and lightning. Hui Shi, undaunted, undertook to answer him; without stopping to think, he began to reply, touching on every one of the ten thousand things in his peroration, expounding on and on without stop in multitudes of words that never ended. But still it was not enough, and so he began to add on his astonishing assertions. Whatever contradicted other men's views he declared to be the truth, hoping to win a reputation for outwitting others. This was why he never got along with ordinary people. Weak in inner virtue, strong in his concern for external things, he walked a road that was crooked indeed! If we examine Hui Shi's accomplishments from the point of view of the Way of Heaven and earth, they seem like the exertions of a mosquito or a gnat—of what use are they to other things? True, he still deserves to be regarded as the founder of one school, though I say, if he had only shown greater respect for the Way, he would have come nearer to being right. Hui Shi, however, could not seem to find any tranquillity for himself in such an approach. Instead, he went on tirelessly separating and analyzing the ten thousand things and, in the end, was known only for his skill in exposition. What a pity—that Hui Shi abused and dissipated his talents without ever really achieving anything! Chasing after the ten thousand things, never turning back, he was like one who tries to shout an echo into silence or to prove that form can outrun shadow. How sad!

1. Judging from the terminology, the "Sage" represents the Daoist ideal, the "gentleman," the Confucian ideal, and what follows, the Legalist ideal of government by laws and bureaucratic control. But perhaps the writer intends all these concepts of government to represent different levels in the great, eclectic concept of ideal government.

2. These are the so-called Six Confucian Classics; Zou and Lu were the native states of Mencius and Confucius, respectively. It has been questioned whether there was ever an actual text called the *Music*, or whether this refers to the body of traditional court music and dances handed down by the Confucian scholars; here, however, the wording seems to

indicate a written text. Descriptions such as this one of the nature of the Six Classics are found in many texts of Han or possibly pre-Han date. The description of the *Odes*, essentially a pun on the words *shi* (poetry) and *zhi* (will or emotion), could also be translated "the *Book of Odes* describes feelings," an ambiguity that has led to much discussion among scholars of literary theory.

3. These are the titles of two sections in the *Mozi*, a text embodying the teaching of Master Mo Di; Mozi's prescriptions concerning burial rites are found in another section entitled "Moderation in Funerals." In fairness, it should be noted that Mozi did not prohibit mourning outright but thought it should be drastically simplified for reasons of economy.

4. Following Yu Yue, I read *chuan* in place of *shan*.

5. "Hard," "white," etc., were topics of logical debate taken up by the Mohist school; they seem to be essentially the same as the paradoxes of the Logicians mentioned on pp. 297–298.

6. *Han Feizi*, sec. 50, mentions three rival factions of the Mohist school, each of which claimed to represent the true teaching of Mo Di. These sects were well-organized groups under the strict control of an elder or grand master (Juzi), who had the right to choose his successor from among the members of the group.

7. Following Zhang Binglin, I read *ku* in place of *gou*.

8. The name is also romanized as Song Xing; in sec. 1, p. 3, he is referred to as Song Rongzi and in other texts as Song Keng. Little is known of him and Yin Wen beyond what is recorded here.

9. Flat on top, like Mount Hua, hence symbolic of equality and peace.

10. Compare sec. 1, p. 3: "He drew a clear line between the internal and the external and recognized the boundaries of true glory and disgrace."

11. Or perhaps the meaning is "they discussed the phenomena of the mind." Zhang Binglin would emend this to read "they discussed the desires of the mind."

12. Little is known of Peng Meng and Tian Pian beyond what is recorded here. Shen Dao is often designated as a forerunner of the Legalist School; only fragments of his writings remain.

13. Following Xi Tong, I read *dao* in place of *shou*.

14. It seems odd in view of what follows that any imperfection should be imputed to the Way; perhaps the text is faulty.

15. Taking the *jiao* of the text as equivalent to the *jiao* that means "to compare," that is, to try to determine the relative value of things.

16. No one has satisfactorily explained these two characters, but on the basis of the parallel phrase in the next sentence, it seems best to follow Ma Xulun in this interpretation.

17. That is, the whirlwind, feather, and grindstone just mentioned.

18. Compare sec. 2, p. 10: “Where there is recognition of right, there must be recognition of wrong,” etc.

19. Guan Yin or the Barrier Keeper Yin appeared on p. 146. A short work attributed to him is still extant but is generally agreed to be spurious. Legend says that when Laozi was leaving China, he was asked by the Barrier Keeper Yin for some written exposition of his teachings and produced the *Daodejing* as a result, though modern scholarship questions whether the name Guan Yin in fact has anything to do with barriers.

20. This first quotation tallies almost exactly with parts of *Daodejing* XXVIII. The other sayings attributed here to Laozi agree in thought and terminology with the *Daodejing* but are not to be found in exactly this form in the present text of that work.

21. The meaning is uncertain.

22. This paradox was quoted on p. 9. As will be seen, most of these paradoxes deal with the relativity of space and time. Since in most cases, we do not know exactly how Hui Shi and the other logicians quoted later explained their paradoxes, it seems best not to try to comment at length on their meaning.

23. Yan and Yue represented the northern and southern extremities, respectively, of the China of this time.

24. Two legs plus the concept of “leg”; compare sec. 2, p. 13.

25. Ying was the capital of the state of Chu.

26. “Hot” is no more than an arbitrary label that men use to describe how they feel in the presence of fire.

27. When one pronounces their names? There are other explanations.

28. The word *zhi*, “pointing,” was translated on p. 10 as “attribute,” that is, what can be pointed to. The meaning here seems to be that the attributes of a thing, that which we can point to, never fully describe the thing itself; if they did, then it would be impossible to separate the thing from its attributes.

29. A work in three *zuan* attributed to the latter, the *Gongsun Longzi*, is still extant. See Max Perleberg, *The Works of Kung-sun Lung-tzu* (Hong Kong, 1952).

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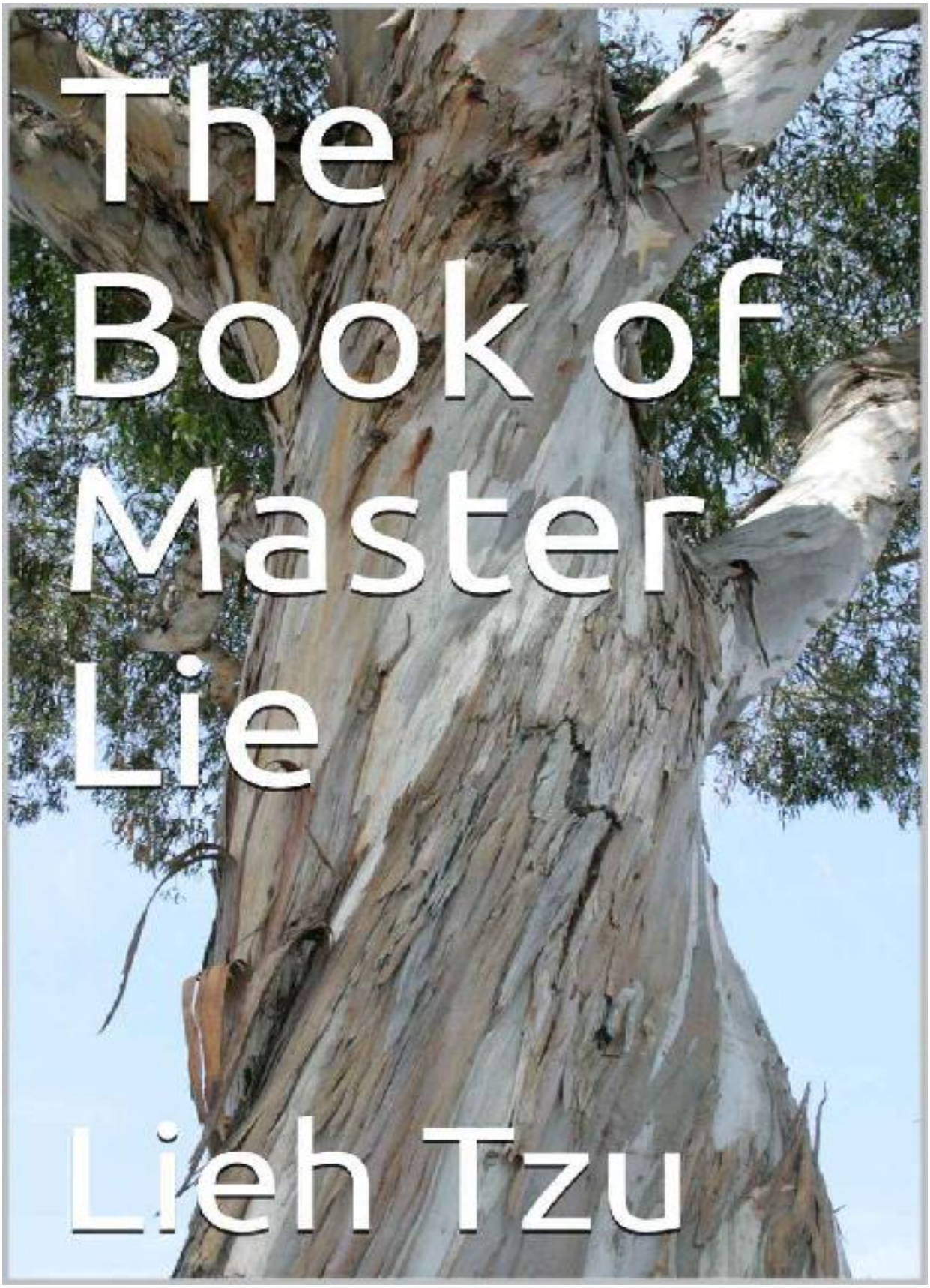
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The Book of Master Lie
Lieh Tzu

The Book of Master Lie

A Taoist Classic

Translated and Annotated
by Thomas Cleary

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Translator's Introduction

The Book of Master Lie, (Liezi/Lieh-tzu) is a Taoist classic of uncertain origin and history, named for an obscure individual of unproven identity or existence. Records of its constitution and transmission are controversial.

And yet the book of Master Lie is one of the greatest works of cognitive art and educational science that has ever been produced. If it has been undervalued, that is precisely because of its excellence.

In Taoist terms, all of this is quite understandable. The primary classic of Taoism states, "Great achievement seems to be missing something, but its use is inexhaustible. Great fulfillment seems empty, but its function is endless. Great straightforwardness seems inarticulate, great skillfulness seems clumsy, great surplus is kept out of sight."

The historical existence and identity of Master Lie remain matters of some dispute, but that is also a natural consequence of the way of life this literary figure represents, that of the so-called real human being.

Over time, the term *real human* came to be used for honorific titles assigned by Chinese courts to famous Taoists of the past, and in some contexts for imaginary people on another plane of existence, but it

originally meant an uncorrupted person with the full range of natural human potential intact, available, and functional.

According to Taoist lore, real human beings were difficult to find, being hidden by design in the texture of life. They had associations, but no organizations. They were prudent about open display of those dimensions of themselves that extended beyond conventional concepts of human potential. This practice of maintaining low profiles was adopted for self-development as well as self-preservation, and also to protect members of ordinary society from transfer of worldly greed and aggression into the domain of spiritual seeking.

The ways of the real people were obscure in comparison to the dazzling displays of court wizards who exploited the desires of emperors to be immortal, or cult leaders who organized their own governments and militias and founded their own dynasties. According to the Taoist classic Chuang-tzu (Zhuangzi),

> Real people in ancient times were just and dutiful in their behavior, without being partisan. They seemed to be lacking, but did not accept anything. They were used to being alone, but were not rigid about it. They expounded their openness, without embellishment. They were so mellow they seemed to be joyful. They acted when there was no choice. They were calm and collected to such a depth as to enhance their health, and gracious to such a degree as to stabilize their character. They were upright, appearing to be like society, yet transcendent and impossible to constrain. They were remote, as if they liked isolation; they were so simple they forgot to speak.

> They made law into a body, made courtesy into wings, made knowledge into timing, made character into an example to follow.

Apart from a few firm historical traces, like traditional descriptions of its namesake the fragmentary legends of the transmission of the book of Master Lie are essentially suggestive. Attributed to a sage of the 4th century BCE., it is alleged to have been in vogue at the imperial court for a time in the early 2nd century BCE, then disappeared into the private sector. Recovered in a scattered state and reconstituted by a famous scholar in the late 1st century BCE, the legend continues, it was edited and reduced from twenty chapters to its current eight chapters.

There is no news of this text in tradition for several hundred years after that, until the last decades of the 4th century CE, when the first known commentator, writing about 370, prefixes an account of his own grandfather's recovery and reconstruction of a scattered text some fifty years earlier, around 320. As this commentary is the earliest firm historical evidence of the work, some scholars have attributed the book of Master Lie itself to this 4th century commentator.

Disappearing from the light of history for hundreds of years again, the book of Master Lie reemerges in the 8th century, when Emperor Xuanzong of the cosmopolitan Tang dynasty (619-906), an admirer of

Taoism, calls for submission of Taoist texts to the throne and establishes an academic degree in Taoism for aspirants to civil service. At this point the book of Master Lie appears once again, and is designated a classic in 742, to be one of four Taoist classics for the official curriculum. The other designated classics are the *Tao Te Ching* (*Daodejing*), the *Chuang-tzu* (*Zhuangzi*), and the *Wen-tzu* (*Wenzi*).

The Book of Master Lie has also remained a hidden treasure for reasons of cultural conditioning and political patronage. One such factor surrounds the acknowledged but ill-defined Buddhist element in this allegedly Taoist text. While borrowed Buddhist terminology abounds in Taoist literature, the *Book of Master Lie* represents Buddhist teachings in purely native Chinese terms.

The reputation of the *Book of Master Lie* was nevertheless affected by its association with Buddhism. Successive waves of xenophobia branded Buddhism as a "foreign" religion in China, more than once resulting in book-burnings. *The Book of Master Lie* was declared mixed with Buddhism in the very first commentary on the text in the 4th century CE, when translation of Buddhist scriptures into Chinese was proceeding apace, and non-Chinese people were taking over part of China.

In the form it is known in today, the text of The Book of Master Lie was allegedly reconstituted after the disintegration of the monumental Han

Dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE). While the Han order was failing, changes in culture proceeded apace. New Taoist cults emerged, some sectors of the aristocracy retreated into alchemy, immortalism, or antinomianism, and Buddhism flowed into China from South and Central Asia. The rich amalgam of liberated thought that this period produced is abundantly reflected in the Book of Master Lie.

Taoism has perplexed conventional scholars even in the East, not only because of the bewildering variety of its manifestations, but also because of the esoteric, technical nature of its literature. Even those stories that ordinarily pass as folk tales are used in Taoist schools to convey inner content. As in the case of Chan Buddhist stories, this inner content becomes manifest as the mind develops specific perceptions, accessed by means of the mystic exercises of which they are analogs. Thus the stories are also used as testing devices, to gauge mental state by reaction, as well as blueprints for further development.

In a Taoist work, one and the same text may appear to contain different doctrines, which the dogmatist may interpret as confusion or contradiction, the literalist may view as interpolation or corruption, but the Taoist employs as instruments to cultivate depth perception. Meditation practices may be disguised as metaphysical or philosophical discourses, mental postures as social policies, and contemplative procedures as ascetic

exercises and aesthetic raptures. The Book of Master Lie uses all of these devices, featuring figures of myth, legend, and history in sayings and stories that both entertain and enlighten.

I. Celestial Signs

1

Master Lie lived in the game preserve of Zheng for forty years without anyone recognizing him. The ruler of the state and the nobles and grandees looked upon him as one of the peasants. During a famine he was going to go to Wei; his disciples said, “If you go with no prospect of returning, how will we call with questions, and how will you teach? Haven’t you heard the word of Lin, Master of Pot Hill?”

Master Lie laughed and said, “What does Pot-Hill have to say? Even so, the master once spoke to the blind man Elder Darkness, and I stood by listening; I’ll try to tell you what he said:

“‘There is that which is born and that which is unborn; there is that which changes and that which is unchanging. The unborn gives birth to that which is born; the unchanging produces change. What is born cannot but be born; what changes cannot but change; therefore they are always being born, always changing. What is always being born, always changing, is never not living, never not changing; yin and yang are thus, the four seasons are thus.

“‘The unborn seems singular; the unchanging is cyclic, with no final limit. No end can be found to the course of the seemingly singular. A book

of the Yellow Emperor says, *The valley spirit does not die; this is called the mystic female. The opening of the mystic female is called the root of heaven and earth. Continuous, as if it were there, its application is effortless.*

"'So what gives birth to things and beings is not born, what changes things and beings is unchanging. Natural birth, natural change, natural formation, natural coloring, natural intelligence, natural strength, natural waning and waxing—if you refer to these as that which produces and changes, forms and colors, enlightens and empowers, destroys and revives, this is incorrect.'"

Master Lie said, “In ancient times, sages summed up heaven and earth in terms of yin and yang. If what has form originates in no form, then where do heaven and earth come from?

“Therefore it is said that there was a cosmic evolution, a cosmic origin, a cosmic beginning, and a cosmic elemental. In the cosmic evolution, energy is not yet manifest. The cosmic origin is the beginning of energy. The cosmic beginning is the beginning of form. The cosmic elemental is the beginning of substance.

“When energy, form, and substance are all present yet not separated, that is called the undifferentiated, meaning that myriad things are mutually undifferentiated and not yet separate from one another. You cannot see it when you look, you cannot hear it when you listen, you cannot find it when you follow, so it is called evolution. Evolution has no formal boundaries; evolution undergoes change constituting a unity; the one changes into seven, seven turns into nine; nine’s change is final, then it reverts to one.

“One is the beginning of form. What is clear and light rises to become heaven, what is opaque and heavy sinks to become earth, while blended energy becomes humanity. Therefore heaven and earth contain vitality from which myriad things and beings are produced.”

Master Lie said, “Heaven and earth do not have complete efficiency, sages do not have complete ability, myriad beings do not have complete vitality. Therefore heaven’s job is to create and to cover, earth’s job is to form and support, sages’ job is to teach and civilize, everyone’s job is what they’re suited for.

“Thus heaven is lacking in some ways, while earth is excellent is some ways. Some things are inaccessible to sages, while some things are accessible to anyone. Why? Because that which creates and covers cannot form and support, that which forms and supports cannot teach and civilize, they who teach and civilize cannot deviate from the appropriate, the appropriately determined does not depart from its position.

“So the course of heaven and earth is either yin or yang; the teaching of sages is either humanity or justice; the proper state of things is either soft or hard. These all conform to the appropriate, and cannot depart from their positions.

“So there is birth, and there is that which gives birth to birth; there is form, and there is that which forms form. There is sound, and there is that which makes sound sound; there is color, and there is that which colors color. There is flavor, and there is that which flavors flavor.

“What birth gives birth to dies, but what gives birth to birth never ends. What form forms is substance, but what forms form has none. The sound made by sound is audible, but what makes sound sound is not emitted. What color colors is visible, but what colors color is not manifest. What flavor flavors can be tasted, but what gives flavor to flavor cannot be tasted.

“These are all functions of the uncreated; it can be yin or yang, soft or hard, short or long, round or square, vital or morbid, hot or cold, floating or sinking, high or low, appearing or disappearing, dark or light, sweet or bitter, foul or fragrant. It has no knowledge and no ability, yet there is nothing it does not know, nothing it cannot do.”

When Master Lie traveled to Wei, as they were eating a meal on the way his followers found a hundred-year-old skull. Pulling out the tangle of weeds and pointing to the skull, he looked back at his disciple Bai Feng and said, “Only he and I know we’ve never been born and never die. Is he to grieve, after all? Am I to rejoice?

“How many species there are! If a frog becomes a quail, in water it becomes water plantain; at water’s edge it becomes moss. Growing on high ground it becomes plantain; when plantain is on a dung-heap, it becomes crowfoot grass. Crowfoot roots become maggots, the blades become butterflies. Butterflies are evanescent; changing into grubs, they hatch under stoves; shaped like sloughed-off skins, they’re called parrot-plucks. In a thousand days parrot-plucks transmute into birds called dry leftover bones. The saliva of dry leftover bones birds becomes a kind of insect, which turns into a vinegar bug. The vinegar-eating bug produces vinegar flies, vinegar flies produce bacon beetles, bacon beetles produce mosquitoes, mosquitoes produce cucumber flies.

“Sheep liver turns to madder, horse blood turns to phosphorus, human blood turns to fox-fire, kites become sparrow-hawks, sparrow-hawks become cuckoos, with cuckoos eventually turning back into

sparrow-hawks, swallows become clams, field mice become quails, rotten melons become fish, leeks become amaranth, old ewes become monkeys, fish eggs become insects. Animals on certain mountains reproduce by parthenogenesis, some water birds reproduce by gazing at each other. There's a totally female species called big waist, and a totally male species called immature ants. Sensitive men are aroused without marrying, sensitive women get pregnant without marrying.

"Hou Qi was born from a giant footprint, Yi Yin was born in a hollow mulberry tree. Dragonflies are born in moisture, flies are born in wine lees. Weeds grow by bamboo, old bamboo produces insects, insects produce panthers, panthers produce horses, horses produce humans. People eventually resolve into elements; all things and all beings come from elements and all go back to elements."

5

The Book of the Yellow Emperor says, “When form moves, it doesn’t produce form, it produces shadows. When sound travels, it doesn’t produce voices, it produces echoes. When nothingness stirs, it doesn’t produce nonbeing, it produces being.”

Form is something that must have an end. Do heaven and earth end? Along with us, they come to an end. Is the end final? I don’t know. The Tao ends in basic beginninglessness, it reaches finality in original impermanence. What is born returns to an unborn state, what has form returns to a formless state.

What is not born is not the fundamental unborn, what has no form is not the fundamental formless. What is born must logically come to an end, what comes to an end cannot but end; similarly, what is born cannot but come into being, yet to wish to perpetuate its existence and curtail its demise is to be deluded about inevitability.

The vital spirit is an allotment from heaven, the physical body is the allotment of earth. The celestial is clear and diffused, the earthly is opaque and condensed. When the vital spirit leaves the body, each returns to its reality. Hence the term *ghost*. Ghosthood means return, returning to the true home. The Yellow Emperor said, “When the vital spirit goes through

its door, and the physical body returns to its roots, how can the self still be there?”

From birth until death, there are four major changes in people: childhood, youth, old age, death.

In childhood, your energy is unified and your will is whole; this is the epitome of harmony. Things do not affect it; no virtue is more than this.

In youth, blood energy overflows, you're filled and aroused by desires and thoughts, and influenced by things, so virtue deteriorates.

In old age, desires and thoughts soften, the body tends toward rest; nothing gets ahead of you, and though not as complete as in childhood, compared to youth you are at ease.

As for death, that is going to rest, returning to the ultimate.

7

When Confucius traveled to Taishan, he saw Rong Qiji on the outskirts of Cheng, clad in deerskin with a rope belt, strumming a lute and singing. Confucius asked, “What are you so happy about?”

He replied, “I have many reasons for happiness. Heaven gives birth to myriad beings, but humans alone are noble; I am human, so I’m happy. In discrimination between males and females, males are ranked higher than females, so the male is respected; since I am a man, this is my second happiness. Some babies are stillborn, some die in infancy; I am already ninety years old, so this is my third happiness. Poverty is normal for scholars, death is the end for people; awaiting death in a normal state, what should I be melancholy about?”

Confucius said, “Good! Here’s someone who can relax himself!”

8

Lin Lei was nearly a hundred years old. In spring he’d put on a leather coat and glean the harvested fields, singing as he went along. When Confucius traveled to Wei, he saw him in the fields; turning to his disciples, he said, “That old man is worth talking to—let’s try to ask him something.” Zigeng requested permission to go. Catching up with him at the edge of a

field, he faced him and said in a tone of lament, “Have you no regrets, that you can go along singing and gleaning?” Lin Lei went right on without stopping, singing all the while. Zigeng kept after him, so he looked up and answered, “What have I to regret?”

Zigeng said, “You didn’t work hard when you were young, you didn’t compete with your generation as you matured, you’re growing old with no wife or children, and you are soon going to die—what kind of happiness could you have, that you sing as you glean?”

Lin Lei laughed and said, “The reasons for my happiness are available to everyone, but they take them for misery instead. The fact that I didn’t work hard when young and didn’t compete with contemporaries as I matured is why I have lived so long. The fact that I’m growing old without wife or children and am soon going to die is why I can be so happy.”

Zigeng said, “Long life is a human desire, and people detest death; how can you enjoy the idea of dying?”

Lin Lei said, “Death and birth are a round-trip, so when I die here, how do I know I won’t be born elsewhere? So how do I know they’re not equivalent? And how do I know it’s not delusion to strive for life? And how do I know my death now will not be better than my life in the past?”

Zigeng didn't understand what Lin Lei said, so he went back and told Confucius. Confucius said, "I knew he was worth talking to; and he was. However, his attainment is not consummate."

9

Zigeng got tired of studying. He told declared to Confucius, “I want a rest.”

Confucius said, “There is no rest while alive.”

Zigeng said, “Then is there nowhere for me to rest?”

Confucius said, “There is. Gaze upon the grave, and you will know your resting place.”

Zigeng said, “How great death is! Cultured people rest therein, petty people are prostrate therein.”

Confucius said, “So you realize this! People all know the pleasure of life but not the pain of life; they know the fatigue of old age, but not the freedom of old age; they know the horror of death but not the peace of death.

“Master Yan said, ‘How excellent was death for the ancients—the benevolent found peace therein, the inhumane were subdued thereby.’ Death is a return of virtue; the ancients referred to the dead as people who have returned.

“To refer to the dead as people who have returned means that the living are travelers. Those who go traveling and don’t know how to return are the lost.

“When one person is lost, the whole society repudiates him, but when all the world is lost, no one knows what’s wrong.

“If someone leaves his homeland and his relatives, gives up his job, and wanders the four quarters never to return, what kind of person is this? Society will consider him a mad vagabond. Now suppose someone takes care of himself, takes pride in his abilities, cultivates his reputation, and boasts to the world without restraint—what kind of person is this? Society will consider him intelligent and clever.

“These two are both wrong, yet society accepts one but not the other. Only sages know who to deal with and who to avoid.”

Someone asked Master Lie, “Why do you esteem emptiness?”

Master Lie said, “Emptiness has no esteem.”

Master Lie said, “It’s not the name; there’s nothing like quietude, nothing like emptiness. By quietude and emptiness you find your abode; by taking and giving you lose your place. When there is fanfare about benevolence and duty only after things have been ruined, there is no possibility of restoration.”

Yu Xiong said, “Evolution goes on unending, heaven and earth shift imperceptibly; who is aware of this? That is why things decreasing in one place increase in another, what is complete here is lacking there. Decrease and increase, completeness and lack, go along with life, go along with death. Going and coming are a continuity, with no perceptible gap; who is aware of this? All energy does not evolve at once, all form does not deteriorate at once. A person’s body and mind differ every day, while skin, nails, and hair are shed as they grow. There is ceaseless change from infancy on; one is not aware of it while it’s going on, but only realizes after it’s happened.”

12

In the country of Qi there was someone who worried that the sky would fall and the earth would crumble, and he'd have no place to rest. He worried so much he couldn't sleep, and he lost his appetite.

Now someone who was worried about his worrying went to enlighten him, saying, "The sky is only a mass of air. The air is everywhere—as we bend, stretch, and breathe, it is circulating in the sky all day long; how can you worry it'll fall?"

The man said, "If the sky really is a mass of air, won't the sun, moon, and stars fall?"

The one trying to enlighten him said, "The sun, moon, and stars are luminous bodies in the mass of air; even if they fell, they couldn't cause any damage."

The other man said, "What about the earth crumbling?"

The one trying to enlighten him said, "The earth is just a mass of matter, filling everywhere—there is no place without matter. Whenever we walk or take a step we are always on the surface of the earth, so why worry about it crumbling?"

Relieved, the man was very joyful. The one who enlightened him was also relieved and joyful.

Hearing of this, Changluzi laughed and said, “Rainbows, clouds, and fog, wind and rain, the four seasons—these are things that massed energy makes in the sky. Mountains, rivers, oceans, metal and stone, fire and wood—these are things that massed form makes on earth. If you know sky and earth are masses of air and matter, how can you say they won’t disintegrate?

“The universe is a minute object in the midst of space. The largest of existents, it is certainly hard to comprehend, certainly hard to fathom. To worry about its disintegration is indeed too remote, but then to say it won’t disintegrate isn’t right either.

“The universe cannot but disintegrate, so it must wind up dissolving. At the time of its disintegration, who wouldn’t be anxious?”

Master Lie, hearing of this, laughed and said, “It’s wrong to say the universe will disintegrate, and it’s also wrong to say the universe will not disintegrate. Whether or not it will disintegrate is something one cannot know. Even so, we are one in the former case and we are one in the latter case. So while alive we don’t know death, and when dead we don’t know life. When we come, we don’t know of going; when we go, we don’t know

of coming. How can I concern myself with whether or not the universe will disintegrate?”

13

Shun asked an assistant, “Can the Tao be possessed?”

He said, “Even your body is not your possession—how can you possess the Tao?”

Shun said, “If my body is not my possession, who owns it?”

He said, “It is a form entrusted by the universe. Life is not our possession; it is a harmony entrusted by the universe. Nature and destiny are not your possessions; they are order entrusted by the universe. Progeny are not your possessions, they are shells entrusted by the universe.

“Therefore we go without knowing where, abide without knowing what to keep, eat without knowing what to consume. The powerful positivity of the universe is energy—how can it be possessed?”

14

Mr. Guo of Qi was very rich, while Mr. Xiang of Song was very poor. Mr. Xiang went to Qi to ask Mr. Guo for the art of wealth.

Mr. Guo told him, “I am good at stealing. After my first year stealing, I could get by; after two years, I had enough; after three years, I was very prosperous. After that, I could contribute to the welfare of the community.”

Mr. Xiang was delighted, but though he understood the word *stealing* he didn't understand the right way to steal. Climbing over fences and breaking into houses, he took whatever he could find.

Before long he was arrested for theft, and the goods he had accumulated were confiscated. Thinking Mr. Guo had misled him, Mr. Xiang went to complain to him. Mr. Guo asked, "How did you steal?" Mr. Xiang told him how. Mr. Guo exclaimed, "Ha! Have you strayed this far from the right way to steal? Let me explain it to you.

"I have heard that heaven has seasons, earth has yields. I steal the seasonal yields of heaven and earth, the moisture of clouds and rain, the fertility of mountains and wetlands, to grow my grain, plant my crops, construct my fences, and build my house. On land I steal birds and beasts, from the water I steal fish and turtles. It's all stealing! Crops, earth and wood, birds and beasts, fish and turtles, are all produced by heaven—how could they belong to me? Yet I steal from heaven with impunity.

"As for gold, jade, and jewels, grain and cloth, goods and money, things that people collect, are they given by heaven? If you steal them and get punished, who is to blame?"

Mr. Xiang was very confused. He thought Mr. Guo was fooling him again, so he went to Professor Dongguo to ask him about this.

Professor Dongguo said, “Isn’t your entire being stolen? Your life is composed and your body is sustained by a combination of stolen yin and yang; how then could external things be other than stolen?

“Truly indeed, heaven, earth, and myriad things and beings are not separate from each other—to consider anything a possession is invariably an illusion.”

“Mr. Guo’s stealing is the public way, so there is no penalty. Your stealing is personal will, so you get punished. Those for whom there are the public and the personal are thieves; those for whom there is neither the public nor the personal are thieves too. Whether public or personal, these are potencies of heaven and earth. For those who know the potencies of heaven and earth, who is to be thought of as stealing, who is to be thought of as not stealing?”

II. The Yellow Emperor

1

For fifteen years after assuming the throne, the Yellow Emperor was delighted that everyone supported him; he nourished his natural life and enjoyed the pleasures of the senses. In the process he became gaunt and dark, confused and emotionally disturbed.

Then for another fifteen years he worried about disorder in the land; using all his intelligence and mental energy, he managed the hundred clans. In the process, he became gaunt and dark, confused and emotionally disturbed.

Finally the Yellow Emperor lamented, “My fault has been excess. Such is the trouble involved in taking care of oneself; such is the trouble of governing everything.”

At this point he set aside his administrative activities, stopped sleeping in his seraglio, sent away his servants, suspended musical performances, cut down on cuisine, and retired into solitude to purify his mind and get control over his body, taking no personal role in government for three months.

Taking a nap one day, he dreamed he traveled to Shangri-la, west of the province of Yan, north of the province of Tai, untold thousands of miles from the country of Qi; it could not be reached by boat, carriage, or foot,

but only by spiritual travel. In that country there were no political leaders, just a state of nature. The people had no habits or cravings, they were just natural. They didn't know to like life or to detest death, so there was no premature death. They didn't know to prefer themselves to others, so there was no love or hatred. They didn't know how to rebel or obey, so there was no profit or harm. They had no attachments, so they had no fears. They didn't drown in water, didn't burn in fire. They were not hurt by hitting, were not pained by scratching. They rode the air like walking on the ground, slept in space as if in bed. Clouds and fog did not obstruct their vision, thunder did not distort their hearing, beauty and ugliness did not distort their minds. Mountains and valleys did not trip them up, for they only traveled in spirit.

When the Yellow Emperor woke up, he was happy and content. Summoning his three deputies, he said to them, "I lived alone for three months, purifying my mind and mastering my body, contemplating a way to live and to govern; but I failed to grasp the art. Tired, I took a nap, and this is what I dreamed. Now I know that the supreme Tao cannot be sought subjectively. Now I realize this; now I have grasped this, yet I cannot tell it to you."

For the next twenty-eight years the whole land was at peace, like that mythical country, until the Emperor passed on. The populace mourned

him for over two hundred years.

2

There is a mountain on an island in the ocean current where there are spiritual people who ingest air and dew instead of grain. Their minds are like deep springs, their bodies are like virgin girls. They have no familiars or intimates; immortals and sages are their subjects. They do not intimidate and do not get angry; the eager and honest are their servants. They give no charity, yet everyone has enough; they do not accumulate or save, yet they themselves have no lack. Yin and yang are always in harmony, sun and moon are always clear, the four seasons are always regular, wind and rain are always even, nursing is always timely, crops are always abundant, there is no plague in the land, no early death among the people, no pestilence among the animals, no apparitions of ghosts.

3

Master Lie's teacher was Old Mr. Shang, and he associated with Master Bai Gao. Having made progress on the Way of the two masters, he returned riding the wind. Hearing of this, Scholar Yin went to stay with Master Lie, not going home for several months. Whenever there was a chance, he'd ask about his art, but Master Lie never answered. Resentful,

Scholar Yin asked leave to go, but Master Lie gave no directions. So Scholar Yin withdrew. After a few months he went back again to follow Master Lie, unable to get it out of his mind.

Master Lie said, “Why do you come and go so often?”

Scholar Yin said, “Before, when I sought guidance from you, you didn’t speak to me, so I was angry at you. Now I’ve gotten over it, so I’ve come back.”

Master Lie said, “I thought you’d understood then—are you so shallow now? Stay a while, and I’ll tell you what I learned from my teachers.

“After three years of working for my teacher and associating with another, my mind dare not think of right and wrong, my mouth dare not speak of gain and loss; that was the first time my teacher even glanced at me. After five years, my mind again thought of right and wrong, my mouth again spoke of gain and loss; that was the first time my teacher smiled at me. After seven years, whatever I thought contained no right or wrong anymore, whatever I said contained no gain or loss anymore; that was the first time my teacher let me sit with him. After nine years, I thought freely and spoke freely, and didn’t know whether I was right or wrong, adding or detracting, or whether others were right or wrong, adding or detracting.

Nor did I know the master to be my teacher, or the other to be my companion. There was no more inside or outside.

"After that, my eyes were like ears, my ears like my nose, my nose like my mouth—all the same. My mind stilled, my body relaxed, my bones and muscles all became flexible. I was unaware of what my body rested on, or what my feet tread on. Going along with the wind east and west, like a dry leaf, I didn't know, after all, whether the wind was riding me or I was riding the wind.

"Now you've hardly been at a teacher's house for any time at all, and already you're complaining over and over. Your individual body may not be taken by the air, your individual physical structure may not be supported by the earth—how could you hope to walk in the sky and ride the wind?"

Scholar Yin was very much ashamed. He bated his breath, not daring to say any more.

4

Master Lie asked the Keeper of the Pass, "Complete people can travel underwater without obstruction, walk on fire without getting burnt, can go beyond all things without fear. How do they get to be this way?"

The Keeper of the Pass said, “This is the protection of pure energy, not of a kind with cunning and cleverness, resolution and daring. Stay a while and I’ll tell you.

“Whatever has appearance, form, sound, or color is a thing. How can things be so disparate? And which of them can take precedence, when they are only forms?

“Things are created in the formless and end in the unalterable. How can any who plumb this stop here? They live by measures without excess, take refuge in a beginningless order, roam where things end and begin. They unify their essence, nurture their energy, and store their power, to commune with the creation of things.

“When they are like this, their nature is kept whole, their spirit has no gaps—how can anything get access to them?

“When a drunken man falls from a cart, he may get hurt, but does not die. His bones and joints are the same as other people’s, but his injury is different from others because his spirit is whole. He doesn’t know when he’s riding, and he doesn’t know when he’s falling either. Neither death nor life, surprise nor fear, enter into his chest, so he is not frightened when he encounters things.

“If even one who gains wholeness in wine is like this, how about one who gains wholeness in Nature? Sages take refuge in Nature, so things

cannot harm them."

5

Lie Yukou performed some archery for Elder Stupid Nobody. Drawing the bow fully with a cup of water on his arm, he shot one arrow after another in continuous succession, as still as a statue all the while.

Elder Stupid Nobody said, "This is deliberate shooting, not spontaneous shooting. Suppose we climbed a high mountain and stood on a precipice overlooking an abyss—could you shoot then?"

So they climbed a high mountain, where Nobody went out on a precipice. Standing with his back to the abyss, heels hanging off the ledge, he beckoned to Yukou to join him. Yukou fell prostrate on the ground, running with sweat.

Elder Stupid Nobody said, "Complete people gaze into the blue sky above, plunge into the center of the earth below, and run freely in the eight directions without even a change of mood. Now you have a fearful expression of aversion—your inner state must be very uneasy!"

6

There was a man of the Fan clan named Zihua who supported so many private mercenaries that the whole country submitted to him. He was a favorite of the ruler of Jin, and his status was higher than the top ministers

of state even though he held no office. Anyone he regarded specially would be given a title by the state of Jin; anyone he particularly disdained would be banished by the state of Jin. Those who flocked to his mansion were as numerous as attendees at court.

Zihua had his mercenaries attack each other in battles of wits and strive to overcome each other in contests of strength. Even if they were wounded right before his eyes, he didn't care. They sported like this all day and night, to the point where it had almost become a custom of the country.

Hesheng and Zibo were top henchmen of the Fan clan. Going on a trip, they passed through a remote area where they lodged at the house of a farmer, Shang Qiukai. During the night, Hesheng and Zibo were talking about the prestige and influence of Zihua, who could cause the thriving to perish and the lost to survive, impoverish the rich and enrich the poor.

Now Shang Qiukai, who had all along suffered hunger and cold, overhead this. Inspired, he borrowed some provisions, loaded them in a basket, and went to the estate of Zihua.

Zihua’s hangers-on were all hereditary aristocrats; they dressed in silk, rode in fancy chariots, swaggered around gazing into the distance. When they saw how old and decrepit Shang Qiukai was, his face burnt black and his clothes unkempt, they all looked down on him. They treated

him with contempt, playing tricks on him, knocking and shoving him around, doing as they pleased.

Through all this, Shang Qiukai never showed any sign of anger. Eventually the hangers-on ran out of tricks and got tired of making fun of him. Finally they took him up in a high tower, where someone claimed that anyone who jumped off would get a reward of a hundred pieces of gold. They all scrambled as if to respond, so Shang Qiukai thought it was true and jumped before anyone else could. Like a bird in flight, he floated to the ground, with no injury to skin and bones.

The Fan clan's gang thought this was accidental, and didn't make much of it. In the same vein, they pointed out a wild river bend and said, "There's a valuable pearl down there; if you can swim, you can get it." Going along once again, Shang Qiukai plunged into the rapids. When he emerged, he actually had found a pearl down there. Now the gang began to wonder. For the first time Zihua admitted him to the ranks of those who ate meat and wore silk.

Before long, a fire broke out in the Fan family storehouse. Zihua declared, "Anyone who can go into the fire and get the silks out will be rewarded according to how much he retrieves." Shang Qiukai went in calmly, going back and forth in and out of the fire without getting sooty or being burned. The Fan clan gang thought he must be a master of the Tao,

so they made a collective apology: "We played tricks on you, not knowing you were a master of the Tao; we abused you, not knowing you were a spiritual person. You must think us fools! You must think us deaf and blind! May we ask, what is your Way?"

Shang Qiukai said, "I have no Way. I don't even know my own mind. Even so, there is something to this. I'll try to tell you what it is.

"Earlier two of your men lodged at my house, and I heard them praising the influence of the Fan clan, which could cause the thriving to perish or the lost to survive, impoverish the rich or enrich the poor. I took this to be true without a second thought, so I came regardless of the distance. Then when I got here, I thought everything your gang said was true, and my only fear was not to be able to take it seriously enough to carry it out successfully—I didn't know what my physical body was doing, or where profit or harm were—I was completely single-minded. Things did not prove otherwise, as you can see; but now that I know your gang was fooling me, I'm suspicious within and on guard without; it's a lucky thing, in retrospect, I wasn't burned or drowned. I'm feverish with shock, shivering with fear! How could I get close to water or fire again?"

After this, whenever members of the Fan clan's gang encountered beggars or horse doctors on the road, they didn't dare abuse them; they'd always get down out of their chariots and salute them.

Zaiwo heard about this and told Confucius. Confucius said, “Didn’t you know? When people are completely sincere, that can affect things. It can move heaven and earth, influence ghosts and spirits, grant freedom in all ways, with no opposition, not just walking on dangerous precipices or plunging into water and fire. Shang Qiukai believed in falsehoods, and even then things did not betray him—how about if other and self are both truthful! Take note of this!”

7

Under the rule of King Xuan of the Zhou dynasty, there was a worker in the ministry of husbandry, Liang Weng, who could tame wild animals. When he fed them in the courtyard, even tigers, wolves, and birds of prey were gentle and tame. They mated and reproduced, and different species lived together without seizing or biting each other.

The king was concerned that this art would die out with him, so he sent Mao Qiuyuan to learn it.

Liang Weng said, “I am just a minor worker—what do I have to teach you? For fear the king might suppose I’m concealing it from you, however, I’ll tell you something about my method of taming tigers.

“Generally speaking, they are happy when indulged and mad when opposed—this is the nature of creatures with animal instincts. So are their

moods capricious? It's all a matter of whether they're upset. Those who feed tigers don't dare give them live animals to eat, because of the fury of the killing; they don't dare give them whole carcasses to eat, because of the fury of the rending. They time their hunger and satiety, to master their rage.

"Tigers are a different species from humans, yet they fawn on someone who takes care of them; this is indulgence. So if they kill someone, that means they're upset. So how dare I upset them and make them angry? I don't even indulge them to please them. That's because when delight subsides there will be anger, and when anger subsides there is joy—both are unbalanced.

"Now there is no thought in my mind to upset or indulge, so birds and beasts look upon me as one of their own kind. Therefore those who roam in my garden do not long for tall forests or wide wetlands; those who sleep in my yard do not wish for deep mountains or recondite valleys—the principle makes them this way."

8

Yan Hui asked Confucius, "I once crossed deep waters and the ferryman handled the boat like a genius. I asked him if it is possible to learn to handle a boat. He said, 'Yes. Someone who can swim can teach it, while someone with skill for swimming can soon do it. Someone who can

dive, however, can handle a boat right away without ever having seen one before.' I asked him about that, but he didn't answer. May I ask what it means?"

Confucius said, "Alas, you and I have long been studying the letter without arriving at the substance. Is this really the Way? The reason someone who can swim can teach it is that he thinks little of the water; the reason someone with talent for swimming can soon do it is that he forgets the water. As for the diver who can handle a boat without ever having seen one before, he looks upon an abyss as like dry land, regards a boat capsizing as like a cart overturning. If everything were overturned right in front of you and yet that couldn't get to you, where would you not be at ease? When you gamble for a chip, you're clever: when you gamble for your belt buckle, you get nervous; if you gamble for gold, you feel faint. You may have the same skill, but when you've got something to lose then you care about externals. Usually those who care about externals are inept in regard to the inward."

9

Confucius saw a waterfall over two hundred feet high, foaming for ten miles. Even sea-turtles, crocodiles, fish, and turtles couldn't swim there. He saw a man go in swimming there, and thought it was someone in

misery who wanted to die. He sent a disciple to go downstream and fish him out. The man emerged several hundred yards away, walking off below the levee, singing as he went, his hair hanging loose.

Confucius caught up with the man and said, “That waterfall is over two hundred feet high, and churns foam for ten miles. Even sea turtles, crocodiles, fish, and turtles can’t swim there. When I saw you plunge in, I thought you were troubled and wanted to die, so I sent a disciple to follow downstream and fish you out. When I saw you come out with your hair hanging down, singing as you went along, I thought you were a ghost. Now that I’ve gotten a good look at you, I find you’re a man. May I ask, do you have a Way to walk on water?”

He said, “No, I have no Way. I began with what was already there, developed naturally, and succeeded by destiny. I go in with the whirlpools and come out with the torrents. I follow the way of the water, without imposing my self on it. This is how I go through it.”

Confucius asked, “What does it mean to begin with what’s already there, develop naturally, and succeed by destiny?”

He said, “I was born on land and am at ease on land—that is what is already there. I grew up in water and am comfortable in water—that is nature. I don’t know why I am the way I am—this is the order of life.”

10

When Confucius went to Chu, he passed through a woods where he saw a hunchback catching cicadas with a gummed stick as easily as picking them up with his hands.

Confucius asked, “Your skill! Do you have a Way?”

He said, “I have a way. For five or six months I’d stack clay balls—two without them falling, and I’d miss but little; when I could stack three without them falling, I’d miss but one out of ten. When I could stack five without them falling, then I could catch cicadas like picking them up. When I get set, I’m like a stump, while the arm I use to catch with is like the limb of a dead tree. However vast the universe, however manifold myriad things, I am only aware of the cicada’s wings. I don’t fidget, I don’t take my attention off the cicada’s wings for anything—how could I fail to catch it?”

Confucius turned to his disciples and said, “‘When concentration is undivided, it’s like genius.’ This saying seems to apply to the hunchback.”

The man said, “You are a scholar—how can you even ask about this? Take care of your own business, then we can talk about something higher.”

11

There was a man living by the sea who liked seagulls. Every morning on the sea he'd sport with the seagulls, and they'd come by the hundreds, without fail. His father said to him, "I've heard the seagulls all play with you. Catch one and bring it here so I can enjoy it."

The next day when he went to the sea, the gulls danced around but didn't land.

Therefore it is said that perfect words make no claim, perfect action has no contrivance. What common knowledge knows is shallow.

12

Zhao Xiangzi led a party of a hundred thousand hunting in Zhongshan, trampling the growth, burning the woods, fanning the flames for miles. A man emerged from a rock wall and bobbed up and down with the smoke. Everyone thought it was an apparition. Then when the fire had passed, he ambled out as if he hadn't been through anything at all.

Xiangzi thought this strange, and kept him for observation. His form and features were those of a human, his breathing and his voice were those of a human. "How did you stay inside the rock?" he asked; "How did you go into the fire?"

That man said, "What is it you are calling 'rock'? What is it you are calling 'fire'?"

Xiangzi said, “What you just came out of is rock; what you just walked on was fire.”

The man said, “I didn’t know.”

When the Marquis Wen of Wei heard about this, he asked Zixia, “What kind of man is that?”

Zixia said, “According to what I heard from Confucius, harmony means universal assimilation to things; then things cannot cause injury or obstruction, and it is possible even to go through metal and stone, and walk on water and fire.”

Marquis Wen said, “Why don’t *you* do it?”

Zixia said, “I am as yet unable to clear my mind of intellection. Even so, I have time to try to talk about it.”

Marquis Wen asked, “Why didn’t Confucius do it?”

Zixia said, “Confucius was one of those who was able to do it yet was able to not do it.”

Marquis Wen was delighted.

13

A shaman named Ji Xian came from Qi to Cheng. He knew about people’s death and birth, their survival and destruction, their calamity and

fortune, and whether people would live long or die young, predicting to the year, month, and day, like a spirit.

When the people of Cheng saw this shaman, they all ran away. Master Lie's mind was intoxicated on seeing him; he went back and told mister Pot Hill, "I used to think your Way supreme, but there is one even more perfect."

Mister Pot said, "I have only taught you the superficials; we haven't gotten to the substance yet. And you insist you've attained the Way? How can you get eggs from a bunch of hens with no rooster? When you pit the Way against the world, that must yield information, thereby enabling someone to read you. Bring that shaman here, and I'll show you.

The next day Master Lie took the shaman to see the mister Pot. When he came out, the shaman said to Master Lie, "Alas, your teacher is dying; he will not survive. He can't last a fortnight! I see something strange in him; I see wet ashes in him."

Master Lie went in to tell mister Pot, weeping profusely. The master said, "I showed him the sign of earth, sprouting where there is no stirring and no stopping; so he only saw me shutting off the dynamic of vital force. Bring him again!"

The next day Master Lie brought the shaman to see mister Pot again. When he came out, he said to Master Lie, "It's lucky your teacher

met me—he may recover. There is life intact; I saw the shut-off power."

Master Lie went in and told mister Pot. The master said, "That time I showed him sky and earth, unconcerned with fame and property, potential emerging from the heels—this is called shut-off power. Thus he only saw my capacity for viability. Bring him again."

The next day, Master Lie brought the shaman to see mister Pot again. When he came out, he said to Master Lie, "Your teacher is sitting unsteadily—I have no way to read him. Let him stabilize, and then I'll read him."

Master Lie went in and told mister Pot. The master said, "That time I showed him absolute emptiness, without a trace. He only saw my faculty of leveling energy. Try bringing him again!"

The next day Master Lie again went with the shaman to see mister Pot. Before he even came to a standstill, the shaman lost control of himself and ran away. Mister Pot said, "Go after him!" Master Lie chased him, but couldn't catch up. He went back and told Mister Pot, "He's gone without a trace—I couldn't catch up with him."

Mr. Pot said, "That time I showed him never leaving my source. I harmonized with him by being empty; he didn't know who or what I was, and took me for reeds bending in the wind, waves going with the flow—therefore he fled."

After that Master Lie thought of himself as not yet having begun to learn, so he went home and didn't go out for three years, cooking for his wife and feeding the pigs like he was feeding people, working without partiality, returning from artifice to simplicity. Solidly independent all his life, sealing out conflict in the midst of confusion, he was consistent in this to the end of his days.

14

When Master Lie went to Qi, he turned around midway and came back. Then he ran into Elder Stupid Blind Man, who said, "Why did you come back?"

"I got scared."

"Why were you scared?"

"I ate at ten taverns, and at five taverns they let me eat for free."

Elder Stupid Blind Man said, "So why did you let it scare you?"

"When inner feelings are not detached, it is revealed physically, creating an emanation that occupies other people's minds, causing them to disregard respect for elders, bringing on trouble. Those tavern keepers are only selling food and drink, gaining only what's left after many expenses. They make but slight profit, and have little influence, and yet they treat me like this—what about a ruler with ten thousand chariots, who toils for the

nation, his mind fully occupied with affairs? He might entrust me with some job and pressure me to do it. That's why I got scared."

Elder Stupid Blind Man said, "You're very insightful. Once you have a place of your own, people will surround you."

Before long Master Lie left, and outside his door was filled with the shoes of those who came to see him. Elder Stupid Blind Man just stood there facing north, his staff under his chin; after a while, he left without speaking.

Visitors reported this to Master Lie. Master Lie ran barefoot, shoes in hand. When he got to the door, he said, "Since you came, Teacher, why didn't you leave any remedy?"

He said, "Enough is enough. I told you that people would surround you, and in fact they are surrounding you. But you can't get people not to surround you; how do you move them? Trying to induce good feelings produces difference; if you insist on making an impression so much that it destabilizes you yourself, then it is meaningless.

"None of those hanging around you will tell you this. Their trivial talk is all poison to people. No one alerts, no one enlightens—why associate together?"

When Yang Zhu traveled south to Pei, Lao Dan journeyed West to Qin. Trying to intercept him in the countryside, he finally met the Old Master in Liang.

The Old Master stopped in his tracks, looked up to the sky, and sighed, “At first I thought you could be taught, but now you’re unteachable.”

Master Yang did not reply. When they reached an inn, he presented water, cloth, and comb, took off his shoes outside the door, and went before the Old Master on his knees, saying, “Earlier you looked at the sky and sighed, ‘At first I thought you could be taught, but now you’re unteachable.’ I wanted to ask you to say something, but you kept on going, and I didn’t dare. Now that you’re taking a break, may I ask what my fault is?”

The Old Master said, “You’re arrogant and overbearing—who could put up with you? Great purity seems ignominious, mature virtue seems insufficient.”

Yang Zhu became uneasy and a change came over his face. “I have respectfully heard your direction.”

Before, when Yang Zhu had left, the innkeeper had greeted him and seen him off; the landlords had waited on him; the landladies had held his towel and comb; the lodgers had vacated their seats for him, and those

warming themselves had made room for him at the fireplace. When he came back, however, lodgers fought him for a seat.

16

Yang Zhu passed through Song; going east, he came to an inn. The innkeeper had two concubines; one was beautiful and the other one ugly, yet the ugly one was more honored than the beautiful one. Master Yang asked why. The innkeeper replied, “The beautiful one is beautiful on her own account; I am not cognizant of her beauty. The ugly one is ugly on her own account; I am not cognizant of her ugliness.”

Master Yang said to his disciples, “Make a note of this! When conduct is noble while eliminating self-important behavior, where would one not be loved?”

17

There is a way of always winning in the world, and a way of not always winning. The way of always winning is called gentility, the way of not always winning is called force. Both are easy to know, yet no one knows them. Hence the ancient saying that force outdoes inferiors while gentility outdoes superiors.

If you outdo inferiors, when you meet equals you're in danger. If you outdo superiors, there's no danger. To master yourself this way, to take responsibility for the world this way, is called spontaneous victory without conquest, inherent responsibility without appointment.

Master Yu said, "If you would be forceful, you must protect it by yielding. Develop flexibility and you will be firm; cultivate yielding and you will be strong. By observing what is developed, the trends of trouble and fortune can be known. Force overcomes its inferior—meeting an equal, it's destroyed. Gentility overcomes superiors—its power cannot be measured."

Lao Dan said, "When an army is forceful it perishes; when wood is inflexible, it breaks. Gentility and yielding are cohorts of life, inflexibility and force are cohorts of death."

18

Appearances don't necessarily have to be the same for intelligence to be the same; intelligence is not necessarily the same when appearances are the same. Sages take sameness of intelligence and leave sameness of appearance; ordinary people take to sameness in appearance and avoid sameness in intelligence—they take to and admire those who are like

themselves in appearance, while avoiding those who differ from themselves in appearance.

What has a tall body, with difference in functions of hands and feet, has hair and teeth, and walks upright, is called a human; but a human is not necessarily without an animal mind. Though one may have an animal mind, one seems akin on account of appearances.

What has wings or horns, fangs or talons, flies or runs on all fours, is called a bird or a beast; but a bird or a beast is not necessarily void of a human mind. Though one may have a human mind, it seems alien on account of appearances.

Fu Xi, Nu Wa, Shen Nong, and Yu had serpentine bodies and human faces, ox necks and tiger noses; they had nonhuman appearances, but they had the virtues of great sages. Jie of Xia, Zhou of Yin, Huan of Lu, and Mu of Chu were all human-like in appearance and faculties, but they had bestial hearts.

So if people stick to one form to seek supreme intelligence, they cannot get near it.

When the Yellow Emperor fought the Red Emperor in the fields of Hill Spring, he led bears, wolves, leopards, cougars, and tigers as the vanguard, with eagles, fighting pheasants, hawks, and kites for signals. This is an example of commanding birds and beasts by power.

When Yao made Kui his music director, at the tinkling of stone chimes the animals danced together, at a tune from the pipes phoenixes came ceremoniously. This is an example of attracting birds and beasts by sound.

So how do the minds of birds and beasts differ from humans? Their forms and sounds are different from humans, so people don't know the way to communicate with them. Sages know all beings and comprehend all beings, so they are able to attract and command them.

In the intelligence of birds and beasts there is that which is naturally the same as humans; in their equal desire to sustain life they don't need to depend on knowledge from humans. Male and female mate, mother and child are close, they avoid flatlands and take to fastnesses, they shun cold and take to warmth, they gather in groups and walk in lines. With the young on the inside and the mature on the outside, they lead each other to drink, and call the group to eat.

In high antiquity, the birds and beasts lived together with people, walked side by side with humans; in the time of the emperors and kings, they began to take fright and run away. Coming to latter days, they hide and flee to avoid harm.

At present, in the country of the Jie people of the East, the people of that country can often understand the speech of domestic animals; this is an

attainment of partial knowledge. The spiritual sages of high antiquity knew the mental conditions of all beings, and understood the utterances of different species. They assembled them, trained them, and took them in, just like the human population. So first they assembled ghosts, spirits, and supernatural beings, then they reached the human population of the eight directions, finally they gathered birds, beasts, and bugs.

This means that species of living creatures are not too different in terms of intelligence. The spiritual sages knew this, and that is why none were left out from their instruction and training.

19

In the state of Song there was a monkey trainer who liked monkeys and raised a troop of them. He was able to understand the monkeys' thoughts, and the monkeys also understood his mind. He reduced his own family's food to satisfy the monkeys' wishes, but soon ran short and had to limit their food. Fearing the monkeys might not agree with him, he first lied to them, saying, "I'll give you chestnuts—three in the morning and four in the evening. Will that be enough?" The monkeys all rose up in fury. Then he said, "How about if I give you four chestnuts in the morning and three in the evening?" The monkeys all quieted down, pleased.

When people entrap each other through the differences in their abilities, it's always like this. Sages use intelligence to encompass ignorant people the way the monkey trainer used his wits to trap the monkeys. The terms and realities may be equivalent, yet they cause them to be glad or mad!

20

Master Ji Sheng raised a fighting cock for King Xuan of the Zhou dynasty. After a period of ten days, the king asked, "Can it fight yet?"

He said, "Not yet. Now it's just strutting around proudly."

Ten days later the king asked again.

He said, "Not yet. It still responds to shadows and echoes."

Ten days later the king asked again.

He said, "Not yet. It's still glaring and mettlesome."

Ten days later the king asked again.

He said, "Almost. It no longer shows any change when another cock cries. It faces others like a wooden rooster; its powers are complete. No other cocks could face up to it—they would just run the other way."

21

Hui Ang met King Kang of Song. King Kang stamped his foot, harrumphed, and said, “What I like is boldness and strength; I don’t like those who act benevolent and dutiful. What have you got to teach me?”

Hui Ang said, “I have a way to make people unable to stab you even if they’re bold, unable to strike you even if they’re strong. Yet even if they don’t dare, that doesn’t mean they don’t want to; I have a way beyond this to make people have no such intent to begin with.

“But even if they have no such intent, that doesn’t mean they’re caring. I have a way beyond this, to cause all the men and women on earth to gladly and willingly care for someone. In terms of sagacity, this is four levels above courage and strength—have you no interest at all, Majesty?”

The king of Song said, “This is something I’d like to learn.”

Hui Ang said, “Confucius and Mo Di—that’s all. Confucius and Mo Di had no territory, yet they were leaders; they had no offices, yet they were chiefs. Everyone in the world, men and women, wanted to contribute to their safety and welfare. Now you, Majesty, are ruler of a country of ten thousand chariots—if you really had the will, everyone in the realm would benefit in their way. That would be far more sagacious than Confucius or Mo Di.”

The king of Song had no response. Hui Ang hurried out. The king said to those by him, “How eloquent, the way that visitor overcame me with

his speech!”

III. King Mu of Zhou

1

In the time of King Mu of Zhou (r. 1001-946 BCE), a magician came from a country of the Far West. He could go into water and fire, penetrate metal and stone, overturn mountains and rivers, move cities and towns. He could travel through the sky without falling, he was not obstructed by contact with solid objects. His manifold transformations and apparitions were inexhaustible. Not only could he alter the appearance of objects, he could also change people's thoughts.

King Mu of Zhou revered this magician like a god, and waited on him like a lord. He let him live in a royal palace, presented him with sacrifices of cattle, sheep, and swine, and selected choice singing and dancing women to entertain him.

The magician considered the king's palace too shabby to live in, his food too foul to eat, and the king's courtesans too smelly and ugly to approach.

So the king remodeled for him. No pains were spared in the construction and embellishment; the treasury was exhausted by the time the tower was complete. Seven thousand feet high, it looked over the Zhongnan Mountain Range, and was called Tower in the Sky.

Then the king selected beautiful virgins with soft skin, had makeup put on them, straightened their eyebrows, outfitted them with hairpins and earrings, and dressed them in gauze draped with silk. With faces powdered and eyebrows penciled, sashes hung with jade rings, fragrant herbs filling the place, they played classical music for his pleasure.

Every month the magician was presented with rich robes, and every day he was provided with delicacies. He was still not comfortable, but he forced himself to put up with it. He had not been staying there long when he asked the king to go on a trip together.

The king took hold of the magician's sleeves, and they flew up into the sky. After a while they came to the magician's mansion.

The magician's mansion was made of gold and silver pointed with pearl and jade; it rose above the clouds and rain, but it was not clear what its foundation was set on—it looked like a mass of clouds.

Every sight and sound there, every aroma and flavor, was not of the human world. The king really thought it was some sort of celestial realm. When the king looked down at his own palace, it seemed like a pile of dirt or a stack of hay.

It seemed to the king that he had stayed there for several decades, without thinking of his own country, when the magician again asked the king to go on a trip together. Where they went, sun and moon could not be

seen above, rivers and seas could not be seen below. The radiance of light dazzled the king's eyes so he could not see, ambient sound befuddled the king's ears so he could not hear. Confused and dispirited, he begged the magician to take him back.

The magician pushed him, and he seemed to fall into a void.

When he woke up, the king was still sitting where he had been before, in the same company as before. When he looked in front of him, his wine had not yet settled, the hors d'oeuvres were still fresh.

The king asked where he'd been. Courtiers said, "Your majesty was thinking silently, that's all."

King Mu was beside himself for three months after that. When he recovered, he questioned the magician. The magician told him, "We journeyed spiritually, not physically. Is that dwelling any different from your Majesty's palace? Are the places we traveled any different from your Majesty's gardens? You're used to what's always there, and you wonder at what soon disappears. Can the limits of transformation, and the speed of time's passing, be grasped in full?"

The king was delighted. With no concern for affairs of state, and no interest in his ministers or consorts, he indulged in thoughts of distant journeys. He had two chariots outfitted with teams of four chargers, with a

driver and assistant. The king rode in one of them as they galloped a thousand miles, coming to the land of the Big Hunting Party tribes.

The Big Hunting Party tribals presented blood from white cranes for the king to drink, and provided milk from cows and mares to wash his feet. They also provided for the other riders as well.

After drinking, they went on, eventually spending the night at the foot of the Kunlun mountains, north of the Red River. The next day he climbed a Kunlun peak, from where he sighted the palace of the Yellow Emperor. He marked it for future generations with a pile of earth.

Subsequently he visited the Matriarch of the West, and quaffed wine on the Jade Pond. The Matriarch of the West sang for the king, and the king sang back, with melancholy lyrics. Then he gazed into the West where the sun sets. In one day he'd traveled thousands of miles. The king then lamented, "Alas, I am not full of virtue, but addicted to pleasure—later generations will probably count up my errors!"

King Mu was hardly a spiritual man. He got all the pleasure he could in life, but he still died when his time was up—and the world thought he'd gone to heaven.

Laochengzi studied magic from master Yin Wen, who told him nothing for three years. Laochengzi asked what his fault was, and requested permission to withdraw.

Master Yin Wen saluted him and showed him inside. Dismissing everyone else, he said to him, “When Lao Dan went West long ago, he looked back and told me, ‘Whatever has created energy and specific form is illusory. What Creation initiates and what yin and yang transmute is said to be born and said to die. What is altered in terms of form by finding out processes and understanding change is said to be a transformation and said to be illusory.

“The agency of Creation is subtle in its skill, profound in its effect, certainly hard to fathom, hard to comprehend. Working on form is obvious in its skill, shallow in its effect, so it readily appears and disappears. When you know that illusion and transformation are no different from birth and death, then you may learn magic. I and you are both illusions—why do you need to learn?”

Laochengzi went home and contemplated master Yin Wen’s words deeply for three months. Eventually he could be present or absent at will, and cause the four seasons to interchange, producing thunder in winter and ice in summer, making birds run and beasts fly. For the rest of his life he never revealed his art, so no one in the world passed it on.

Master Lie said, “Those who are skilled in effecting transformation use their science secretly; their apparent merit is the same as others. The virtues of the Five Emperors and achievements of the Three Kings were not necessarily due to the power of intelligence and courage—some were magically accomplished. Who can fathom this?”

3

Consciousness has eight manifestations, dreaming has six symptoms. What are the eight manifestations of consciousness? Purpose, action, gain, loss, sadness, happiness, birth, and death. These are experienced by the physical body. What are the six symptoms of dreaming? Normal dreaming, dreaming due to fright, dreaming due to thinking, waking dreaming, joyful dreaming, fearful dreaming. These come from psychic interaction.

When things occur through unconscious sense and change, one is confused about their source when they happen. When things occur through conscious sense and change, one knows their source when they happen. When one knows their source, one has no fear.

The cyclic fluctuations of the body are all related to heaven and earth and correspond to types of things. So when yin energy is strong one dreams of crossing large bodies of water and becoming afraid; when yang

energy is strong, one dreams of going through fire and burning. When yin and yang are both strong, one dreams of life and death. When very full, one dreams of giving; when very hungry, one dreams of getting. So those whose affliction is flighty insubstantiality dream of floating, while those whose affliction is depressive gravity dream of sinking. When you sleep with a belt on, you dream of snakes. If a bird in flight pecks at your hair, you dream of flying. On the verge of a chill you dream of fire; on the verge of sickness you dream of food. One who drinks wine will be sad, one who sings and dances will lament.

Master Lie said, "Psychic encounters make dreams, physical interactions create phenomena. Therefore thoughts during the day and dreams during the night are encounters of mind and body. Therefore thoughts and dreams naturally disappear in one whose mind is stable. True awareness is not spoken, true dreams are not interpreted; they are processes of assimilation of things. 'The real people of antiquity spontaneously forgot their awareness and didn't dream when they slept'—is this at all nonsensical?"

4

In the southern corner of the extreme West there is a country of unknown borders call the Pristine Wasteland, where yin and yang energies

do not mix and so cold and heat are not differentiated, where sun and moon do not shine and so day and night are not differentiated. The people thus do not eat or wear clothes, but mostly sleep. Waking up once every fifty days, they think what they do in dreams is real and what they see while awake is illusory.

In the middle of the four seas is called the Central Country; it straddles the Yellow River south to north, and crosses Mt. Tai east to west, extending thousands of miles. There yin and yang are precisely regular, so cold and heat alternate; dark and light are clearly divided, so day and night alternate. Some of the people there are intelligent, some are foolish. All creatures reproduce abundantly, and people have many talents and skills. There are rulers and ministers over them, with rites and laws governing them. Their utterances and actions are countless. Alternatively waking and sleeping, they consider their doings while awake to be real and their perceptions while dreaming to be illusion.

In the northern corner of the extreme East there's a land called Country of Crumbling Mounds. There the weather is always hot, and the soil doesn't produce good crops on account of excessive sun and moon light. The people there eat roots and nuts, and don't know how to cook food. They are hard-hearted and violent, and the strong oppress the weak;

they value conquest without caring for justice. They mostly run and seldom rest; they are always awake and don't sleep.

5

Mr. Yin of Zhou was a big businessman; his workers had no rest from dawn to dusk. Among them was an old laborer whose physical strength was exhausted, yet he was worked harder and harder. By day he did his tasks groaning and grunting, while at night he slept soundly, completely worn out. As his consciousness dissolved, every night he'd dream he was ruler of a nation, reigning over the people, in charge of the affairs of the nation. Partying in palaces, indulging in his heart's desires, he was incomparably happy. When he woke up, he'd return to his job.

When someone tried to console him for his hard work, the laborer said, "A human lifetime is half day and half night. In the daytime I'm a laborer, which is indeed miserable; but at night I'm a king, with pleasures beyond compare. Why should I complain?"

As for Mr. Yin, he managed his worldly affairs conscientiously and ran his family business thoughtfully; mind and body both tired, at night he too slept with exhaustion. Every night he dreamed he was a servant, running all sorts of errands and doing all sorts of chores, repeatedly hollered

at and beaten with a stick. In his sleep he muttered, groaned, and grunted all night long.

Troubled by this, Mr. Yin consulted a friend. His friend said, "Your status amply affords you prosperity; you have plenty of property and assets, far more than most people. At night, when you dream, you're a servant. This is the predictable norm of alternation of hardship and ease. If you want to have it your way both waking and dreaming, how could you attain that?"

Mr. Yin listened to his friend's advice, relaxing his workers' schedule and reducing his own concerns; then his illness abated a bit.

6

A man of Zheng was gathering firewood in the fields when he spooked a deer; overtaking it, he struck it down and killed it. Fearing someone might see it, for the time being he hid it in a dry ditch and covered it with brush. He was unable to contain his joy.

Later, however, he couldn't locate the place where he'd hidden the deer. So in the end he thought he'd dreamed it. As he went along the road, he kept muttering about it; someone overheard him, and managed to find the deer.

When this man got home, he told his wife, “Earlier a woodcutter dreamed he’d caught a deer but didn’t know where it was; now I’ve found it, so that must have been a true dream!”

His wife said, “Could it be that you dreamed you saw a woodcutter catching the deer? Was there even a woodcutter? Now you’ve actually found a deer—does this mean your dream was true?”

Her husband said, “If that’s how I found the deer, what does it matter if it was the dream of another or my own dream?”

After the woodcutter returned home, he was uneasy about having lost the deer. That night he actually dreamed of the place he had hidden it, and also dreamed of the man who had discovered it. Come morning, he went looking based on his dream, and found it. Subsequently he laid claim to the deer, filing suit with the magistrate.

The magistrate said, “When you first bagged the deer, you mistakenly thought it a dream. Then when you located the deer through a true dream, you mistakenly thought it real. He took your deer in actuality, and you dispute with him over the deer. His wife also thinks he dreamed he found someone else’s deer. No one owns the deer, but now that there is this deer here, please divide it in two.”

This came to the attention of the ruler of Zheng. He said, “Ha! Isn’t the magistrate dividing someone’s deer in a dream?” He consulted the

prime minister about it. The prime minister said, “I can’t tell whether he’s dreaming or not. To distinguish waking from dreaming takes a Yellow Emperor or a Confucius. Now that there are no more Yellow Emperor or Confucius, who is to distinguish them? But it will do to follow the dictate of the magistrate.”

7

Huazi of Yangli in Song suffered from forgetfulness in middle age. What he’d take in the morning he’d forget at night, what he’d give at night he’d forget in the morning. On the street he’d forget to walk, in his house he’d forget to sit. At any given moment he was not conscious of what went before, and later he’d be unconscious of what was going on presently.

His whole family was troubled by this. They consulted a diviner to diagnose it, without results. They consulted a shaman for prayer over it, but that didn’t stop it. They consulted a physician to treat it, but that didn’t relieve it.

There was a Confucian of Lu who introduced himself as able to cure this. Huazi’s wife and children offered him half their estate for the prescription. The Confucian said, “This cannot be figured out by divination, cannot be exorcised by prayer, cannot be relieved by medicine. I will try to alter his mind, change his thinking, so that he may recover.”

Now the Confucius tested Huazi by exposing him to the elements, and found he asked for clothing. He starved him, and he asked for food. He shut him in the dark, and he asked for light. The Confucian joyfully told the son, “His ailment can be eliminated, but my prescription is a secret passed down through the generations without being revealed to outsiders. Send everyone away, and leave me alone with him in the house for seven days.”

They followed directions, and nobody knew what the Confucian did, but Huazi’s chronic ailment cleared up in a day.

Once Huazi woke up, he became furious. Ejecting his wife and punishing his son, he went after the Confucian with a spear. Restraining him, the local people asked him why he was acting that way.

Huazi said, “Before, when I was forgetful, I was serenely unaware of whether heaven and earth existed or not. Now that I am suddenly conscious of the past, I’m upset by the survival and passing, the gain and loss, the sorrow and joy, the liking and disliking, of several decades past; I’m afraid that future survival and passing, gain and loss, sorrow and joy, liking and disliking, will disturb my mind like this—can I even have a moment of forgetfulness?

Zigeng heard of this and wondered; he told Confucius about it. Confucius said, “This is not within your reach!” Then he turned to Yan Hui

and told him to record this.

8

Mr. Pang of Qin had a son who was intelligent in youth but suffered from confusion and disorientation when he grew up. He heard songs as dirges, saw white as black, smelt fragrance as putrid, tasted sweets as bitter, did wrong thinking it right. In his mind, everything was reversed—sky and earth, the four directions, water and fire, cold and heat.

Mr. Yang said to the father, "The gentlemen of Lu have many skills—perhaps they can cure him. Why don't you go there and find out?"

The father went to Lu, but as he was passing through Chen he met Lao Dan, and told him about his son's symptoms.

Lao Dan said, "How do you know your son is confused? Nowadays everyone in the world is confused about right and wrong, blind about what is beneficial and what is harmful. There are so many with the same affliction that no one realizes it.

"However, confusion in one person is not enough to ruin the whole family. Confusion in one family is not enough to destroy a whole community. Confusion in one community is not enough to destroy a whole country. Confusion in one country is not enough to destroy the whole world. But if the whole world is confused, who is destroying it?

“If everyone in the world had a mind like your son, then you would be the one who’s confused. Who can correct sorrow and happiness, sound and form, scent and flavor, right and wrong?

“Furthermore, these words of mine are not necessarily not confused; how much more so the gentlemen of Lu, who are the most confused of all—how could they resolve others’ confusion? You’d best pack your bag and go straight home!”

9

A man of Yan was born in Yan but grew up in Chu. Then when he got old, he returned to his native country.

As they were passing through Jin, fellow travelers teased him. Pointing to a walled city, they said, “This is the citadel of the nation of Yan.” The man blanched, visibly moved. Then they pointed to a shrine and said, “This is your village shrine.” The old man sighed. Then they pointed to a house and said, “This was your ancestors’ abode.” Now he wept profusely. They pointed out a mausoleum and said, “There are your ancestors’ tombs.” The man wailed uncontrollably.

His fellow travelers laughed and said, “We were fooling you—this is still only the country of Jin.”

The man was very embarrassed. Then when he finally reached Yan and really beheld the citadel and shrine of Yan, and actually saw his ancestors' home and tombs, he wasn't so sad.

IV. Confucius

1

When Confucius was living in retirement, Zigeng went to wait on him, and found him looking sad. Zigeng didn't dare question him; he went out and told Yan Hui. Yan Hui picked a harp and sang; Confucius heard it and called him in, asking, "Why are you so happy?

Yan Hui said, "Why are you so sad?"

Confucius said, "First tell me what you mean."

Yan Hui said, "In the past I heard you say that if one is content with Creation and acknowledges destiny, one will thus not be sad. That is why I'm happy."

Confucius remained silent for a while, looking offended. Then he said, "Did I say that? Your conception is mistaken. This is something I said in the past, that's all. Please consider what I say now to be correct.

"You only know the carefree condition of accepting Creation and acknowledging destiny; you don't know the magnitude of the grief of accepting Creation and acknowledging destiny. Now I will inform you of the reality of it.

"Cultivating your individual self, not caring whether you're struggling or successful, knowing that things that come and go are not your self, unconcerned by change and chaos—this is what you call the freedom

from sorrow that comes from accepting Creation and acknowledging destiny. In the past I edited the classics of poetry and history and reformed rituals and music, to govern the land and bequeath to coming generations. I didn't just cultivate myself as an individual, I brought order to the state of Lu. But the rulers and ministers of Lu are losing their proper relationship day by day; humanity and justice are declining while feeling and character are weakening. If the Way is not practiced in one state as it was in past years, what will become of the world in the future? That's how I came to realize that poetry and history, ritual and music, are no help in bringing order to chaos; yet I don't know how to change them. This is what those who accept Creation and acknowledge destiny lament.

"Even so, I have realized this. Acceptance and acknowledgment are not what the ancients called acceptance and acknowledgment. Accepting nothing and acknowledging nothing are true acceptance and true acknowledgment; thus there is nothing one cannot accept, nothing one cannot acknowledge, nothing one is not concerned about, nothing one will not do. Why abandon poetry and history, ritual and music? Why change them?"

Yan Hui paid respects to Confucius and said, "I get it too." Then he went out and told Zigeng.

Zigeng was stunned. He went home and thought intensely for seven days, neither sleeping nor eating, to the point where his bones stood out. Yan Hui went again to explain it to him, and then he returned to Confucius' school, where he played music, sang poetry, and read books for the rest of his life.

2

When grandee Chen made an ambassadorial visit to Lu, he met privately with Mr. Shusun. Mr. Shusun said, "There is a sage in our state."

Chen said, "Isn't it Confucius?"

Shusun said, "Yes."

Chen asked, "How do you know he's a sage?"

Mr. Shusun said, "I've often heard Yan Hui say that Confucius can use his body without his mind."

Grandee Chen said, "There's a sage in my state too. Don't you know?"

Shusun asked, "What sage are you referring to?"

Chen replied, "There is a disciple of Lao Dan called the Master of the Hidden Storehouse. Having attained Dan's Way, he can see with his ears and hear with his eyes."

When the Lord of Lu heard of this, he was amazed; he had a top noble invite that master with all courtesy. The Master of the Hidden Storehouse came in response to the invitation. The Lord of Lu humbly asked about this ability.

The Master of the Hidden Storehouse said, “This has been reported mistakenly. I am able to see and hear without using my eyes and ears; I can’t interchange the function of eye and ear.”

The Lord of Lu said, “This is even more extraordinary; how is it done? Pray tell me.”

The Master of the Hidden Storehouse said, “My body merges with mind, mind merges with energy, energy merges with spirit, spirit merges with nothingness. Whatever comes to me, the slightest existent, the faintest sound, be it far beyond the eight infinities, or as close as between eyebrow and eyelash, I invariably cognize it. But I don’t know if this is the awareness of my seven apertures and four limbs, or the cognition of my heart, gut, and internal organs; it’s just spontaneous knowing, that’s all.”

The Lord of Lu was delighted. Another day he told Confucius. Confucius smiled and did not reply.

The prime minister of Shang met Confucius and asked, “Are you a sage?”

Confucius said, “I don’t dare presume to be a sage, but I’m learned and knowledgeable.”

The prime minister of Shang asked, “Were the Three Kings sages?”

Confucius replied, “The Three Kings skillfully appointed the wise and the courageous, but I don’t know if they were sages.”

The prime minister asked, “Were the Five Emperors sages?”

Confucius replied, “The Five Emperors skillfully appointed the benevolent and the just, but I don’t know if they were sages.”

The prime minister asked, “Where the Three August Ones sages?”

Confucius replied, “The Three August Ones skillfully appointed those in accord with the times, but I don’t know if they were sages.”

The prime minister of Shang was shocked. “Then whom do you consider a sage?”

Confucius made a face, and then after a while said, “There is a sage among the people of the West. He does not govern, yet there is no disorder; he is spontaneously trusted without saying anything, he is naturally effective without exerting influence. He is so great that the people cannot label him. I suspect he is a sage, but I don’t know if he’s really a sage or not.”

The prime minister of Shang remained silent, thinking to himself, “Confucius is fooling me!”

4

Zixia asked Confucius, “What is Yan Hui’s character like?”

Confucius said, “Hui’s humaneness is greater than mine.”

“How about Zigeng’s character?”

Confucius said, “His eloquence is greater than mine.”

“How about Zilu’s character?”

Confucius said, “His bravery is greater than mine.”

“How about Zishang’s character?”

Confucius said, “His dignity is greater than mine.”

Zixia got off his seat and asked, “Then why do these four attend you, master?”

Confucius said, “Sit down, and I’ll tell you. Yan Hui is capable of being humane, but not capable of change. Zigeng is capable of being eloquent but not capable of keeping silent. Zilu is capable of bravery but not capable of reticence. Zizhang is capable of being dignified, but not capable of conforming. If one who had what all four have were to slight me, I wouldn’t accept it. That is why they attend me devotedly.”

Having been apprenticed to Lin the Master of Pot Hill, and associated with the Old Ignorant Blind Man, Master Lie took up residence in the south suburbs. Those who settled there to follow him were so numerous day by day they could not be counted. Even so, Master Lie still thought little of it; he debated with them every day, listening to all of them. Thus he never visited the Master of the South Suburbs, even though they were next-door neighbors for twenty years. One day they crossed paths on the road, and seemed not to regard each other. Their followers thought there must be bad blood between Master Lie and the Master of the South Suburbs.

Someone from Chu asked Master Lie, "What have you and the Master of the South Suburbs got against each other?"

Master Lie said, "The Master of the South Suburbs is full in appearance but empty at heart; his ears hear nothing, his eyes see nothing, his mouth says nothing, his mind knows nothing, his body is unchanging. What's the point of visiting each other? Even so, as an experiment I'll go with you."

He selected forty of his disciples to go along. When they saw the Master of South Suburbs, they found him like a statue, and couldn't

communicate with him. Then they looked at Master Lie: his body and spirit were not together, and it was impossible to socialize with him.

Suddenly the Master of the South Suburbs pointed to someone in the last row of Master Lie's disciples and spoke to him forcefully, like someone intent on winning an argument.

Master Lie's disciples were surprised at this. When they got home, they all had looks of doubt on their faces.

Master Lie said, "Those who get the idea have nothing to say, and neither do those who know everything. Speaking by saying nothing is still speech; taking knowing nothing to be knowledge is still knowing. Saying nothing and not speaking, knowing nothing and not knowing—these are still speech, still knowledge. And there is nothing unsaid, nothing unknown, yet nothing said, nothing known. That's simply the way it is—why are you randomly surprised?"

6

When Master Lie was an apprentice, after three years he no longer presumed to think of right and wrong, did not dare to speak of gain and loss; only then did Old Shang take a look at him. After five years he again thought of right and wrong and spoke of gain and loss; only then did Old Shang smile. After seven years, there was no right or wrong in whatever he

thought, no gain or loss in whatever he said. Then the master let him sit next to him for the first time. After nine years, he gave free rein to thought and speech without being conscious of his own right or wrong or gain or loss, or others' right or wrong or gain or loss. Inside and outside were ended. After that his eyes were like ears, his ears like his nose, his nose like his mouth, all the same. His mind was still, his body relaxed, his bones and muscles merged. He was not aware of what his body rested on, what his feet walked on, what his mind thought of, what his words contained.

This is how he was, that's all; so logically he had nothing to hide.

7

At first Master Lie liked traveling, but the Master of Pot Hill asked him, "You like traveling. What do you like about traveling?"

Lie said, "The pleasure of traveling is that the scenery never gets familiar. Other people travel to see the sights; I travel to see the changes. There's no one who can distinguish travel of one kind from another."

The Master of Pot Hill said, "Your traveling is certainly the same as others, yet you insist it's different? Whatever the sights, their changes are always seen. You enjoy the inconsistency of things without being aware of your own inconsistency; you travel outward without knowing how to gaze inward. Those who travel outward seek completeness in things; those who

gaze inward find sufficiency in themselves. Finding sufficiency in oneself is the goal of travel; seeking completeness in things is travel without success."

Master Lie never went out again for the rest of his life, thinking he didn't know how to travel.

The Master of Pot Hill said, "Isn't this the goal of travel? Supreme travel doesn't know where it goes; supreme gazing does not know what it observes. Everything is travel, everything is observation—this is what I call travel, this is what I call gazing. That is why I suggest this is the goal of travel."

8

Long Shu said to [the physician] Wen Zhi, "Your art is subtle. I have an illness; can you cure it?"

Wen Zhi said, "I'm at your service. But first tell me your symptoms."

Long Shu said, "I do not consider it glorious to be praised by everyone in my hometown, and I do not consider it a disgrace to be vilified by everyone in the state. I do not delight in gain or sorrow over loss. I look upon life as I do death, I look upon wealth as I do poverty. I look upon humans as I do swine, I look upon myself as I do others. When I am at

home, it is like being at an inn on a journey; I look upon my hometown like a foreign country. With all these ailments, rank and reward cannot encourage me, punishments and penalties cannot intimidate me. Prosperity and decline, gain and loss, cannot change me; sorrow and joy cannot move me. So of course I can't work for the government, socialize with relatives and friends, control my wife and children, or govern my servants and slaves. What disease is this? What prescription can relieve it?"

Wen Zhi had Long Shu stand with his back to the light. Wen Zhi focused on the light from behind and observed him. Having done this, he said, "Aha! I see your heart! Your heart is empty—you are almost a sage! Six of the openings in your heart are free-flowing, but one opening is not functional. Could this be why you currently consider sagehood a sickness? This cannot be eliminated by my low-level art."

9

What is always alive without coming from anywhere is the Way; what is alive due to life and therefore doesn't perish in spite of ending is Eternity.

To perish because of living is unfortunate; to die normally for a reason is also the Way. To die because of death, therefore perishing spontaneously though not finished, is also normal.

To come to life on account of death is fortunate. Therefore living without servile compulsion is called the Way, while attaining an end by means of the Way is called eternity. To die for a practical purpose is also referred to as the Way; to die by the Way is also called eternity.

When Ji Liang died, Yang Zhu sang in front of his house. When Sui Wu died, Yang Zhu patted the corpse and cried. When common people are born and common people die, the commoners sing, the commoners cry.

10

One who's about to go blind can see a strand of hair before; one who's about to go deaf can hear a gnat flying before. One who's about to lose the sense of taste can distinguish water from different rivers before; one who's about to lose the sense of smell can detect scorching and decay before. One who is getting stiff is agile and limber before; one who is getting confused discerns right and wrong before. Thus it is that things do not revert until they've reached their peak.

11

There were many wise people in the wilds of Zheng, many intellectuals in East Village. Among the followers in the wilds was a

certain Uncle Rich Man; passing through East Village on a journey, he met the legalist and logician Deng Xi.

Deng Xi turned around and looked at his disciples; smiling, he said, "I'll tease this visitor for you—how would you like that?"

His disciples said, "That's something we'd like to witness."

Deng Xi said to Uncle Rich Man, "Do you now the meaning of feeding off and feeding? Those who feed off others and can't feed themselves are comparable to dogs and pigs. To raise animals or feed people so that the animals or the people work for you is human power. To enable your followers to eat their fill, dress well, and have leisure to rest is an accomplishment of government. If old and young gather in crowds only to be penned in cages to be slaughtered for the kitchens, how are they different from dogs and pigs?"

Uncle Rich Man didn't answer. A follower of Uncle Rich Man came forward out of turn and said, "Haven't you heard of the many skills of the states of Ji and Lu, sir? There are those skilled in construction and carpentry, those skilled in metallurgy and leatherworking, those skilled in song and music, those skilled in literature and mathematics, those skilled in military operations, those skilled in religion—a plurality of abilities is available. And yet there is no leadership, no one able to put them to work. Instead, the leaders are ignorant, the employers are incompetent, and yet

those who know this and are capable still work for them. Rulers are my errand-boys—what are you so proud of?"

Deng Xi had no reply. With a look at his followers, he retreated.

12

Gongyi Bai was famed among the lords for strength. The Duke of Tangxi spoke of this to King Xuan of Zhou, and the king sent him an official invitation to court.

When Gongyi Bai arrived, they looked at his physique and saw it was that of a weakling. Perplexed, King Xuan asked, "How strong are you?"

Gongyi Bai said, "I'm strong enough to break a grasshopper's leg and lift a cicada's wing."

The king flushed and said, "I'm strong enough to rip apart rhinoceros hide and drag nine bulls by the tail, yet still reproach myself for weakness. Why are you famous all over the land for strength when you can only break grasshopper legs and lift cicada wings?"

Gongyi Bai sighed and shrank back from his seat, saying, "Good question, Majesty! I will be so presumptuous as to tell the truth.

"I had a certain master Shang Qiu as my teacher; his strength was unmatched in all the land, yet unknown even to his family and relatives,

because he never used his strength.

“I worked for him faithfully, and he finally told me, ‘If people want to see the unseen, let them look at what others don’t observe; if they want to attain the unattainable, let them practice what others do not do.

“‘So those who would learn to see first look at cartloads of kindling; those who would learn to hear first listen to giant bells. For those who have ease within, there is nothing difficult outside; because there is nothing difficult for them outside, their repute doesn’t get out of their houses.’

“Now my repute among the lords is because I’ve disobeyed my teacher’s instruction and revealed my ability. Nevertheless, my reputation isn’t due to my pride in my strength, but my ability to use my strength. Isn’t that better than those who take pride in their strength?”

13

Prince Mou of Zhongshan was a sagacious duke of the state of Wei. He liked to associate with intellectuals, not worrying about affairs of state. He enjoyed the company of the logician Gongsun Long. The disciples of the conventionalist Yuezheng Ziyu laughed at this, and Prince Mou asked him, “Why do you laugh at my fondness for the company of Gongsun Long?”

Ziyu said, “It’s Gongsun Long’s character—his conduct has no guidance, his learning has no associates. He is glib but misses the point; he is uncommitted and unaffiliated; he has a penchant for oddities and tells tall tales. He wants to confuse people and silence them; he exercises this with the likes of Han Tan.”

Prince Mou’s expression changed; he said, “How do you characterize Gongsun Long’s faults? I’d like to hear the truth.”

Ziyu said, “I laugh at Long’s preposterous statements to Kong Quan, that a good archer can hit the back of one arrow with the point of the next arrow shot, shot after shot striking the last, so that the first arrow is still sticking out in a straight line without falling while the last arrow is still on the bowstring.

“Kong Quan was astonished at this, but Long sad, ‘This is not yet marvelous. Once the disciple of an expert archer got mad at his wife, and in order to scare her he took a powerful bow and a well-crafted arrow and shot at her eye. The arrow came right at the pupil of her eye, but she didn’t even blink. The arrow fell to the ground without raising dust. Are these indeed the words of a man of wisdom?”

Prince Mou said, “The words of a man of wisdom are not understood by the ignorant, to be sure. When each following arrow strikes the one before it, that’s a matter of aligning the following with the

foregoing. When an arrow is aimed at someone's eye and yet she doesn't blink, that means the momentum of the arrow is used up. How can you wonder?"

Yuezheng Ziyu said, "You're a follower of Long—how could you but cover up his flaws? I'll tell you one even worse: Long buffaloed the King of Wei, saying, 'Having intention negates mind, having a goal negates arrival. There is something that does not come to an end, there is a shadow that does not move. Hair can pull a ton, a white horse is not a horse. An orphan calf never had a mother.' His contradictions and perversions are too numerous to tell."

Prince Mou said, "You think excellent words preposterous because you don't understand them. You are the one who's preposterous.

"You see, when there are no intentions, then minds are the same; when there is no goal, everyone's arrived. That which causes things to come to an end always exists. The reason a shadow doesn't move is that each shift is a new shadow. Hair can pull a thousand pounds because the stress is distributed equally. A white horse is not a horse in terms of the disparity between appearance and name. An orphan calf never had a mother because if it has a mother it isn't an orphan calf."

Yuezheng Ziyu said, "You rationalize everything Gongsun Long crows; you'd take him seriously even if he talked through his ass, saying

‘Yes, sir!’ if he farted.”

14

Yao governed the land for fifty years, but didn’t know if the land was orderly or not, or if the masses supported him or not. He asked his closest advisers, but they didn’t know. He asked the outer circle at court, but they didn’t know. He asked the educated who held no office, and they didn’t know.

Yao then dressed in humble clothing and roamed the streets. He heard a child singing, “The establishment of our people is all your achievement, unconsciously and unknowingly following the laws of God.”

Delighted, Yao asked, “Who taught you this?”

The child said, “I heard it from a grandee.”

So he asked the grandee. The grandee said “It’s an ancient song.”

Yao returned to his palace, summoned Shun, and ceded the land to him. Shun accepted without refusing.

15

The Keeper of the Pass said, “Don’t dwell on yourself, and things will be clear. Like water in movement, like a mirror in stillness, like an

echo in response, the Way is thus in harmony with people.

"People deviate from the Way on their own; the Way does not deviate from people. Those who harmonize well with the Way don't even need their ears or eyes, don't use their strength or their mind. If you want to harmonize with the Way but seek it by means of looking and listening and formal knowledge, you'll never attain it.

"When you look it lies ahead, but suddenly it's behind; try to use it and it fills the universe, try to dismiss it and no one knows where it is. The mindful cannot alienate it, the mindless cannot approach it; the only ones who attain it realize it silently and actualize it naturally. Knowledge without subjectivity, capability without artifice—these are true knowledge and true ability.

"If you try to arouse the insensate, how can it feel? If you try to arouse the inert, how can it act? It is a mass of matter, a conglomeration of particles—even if it does nothing, that is not the principle."

V. Questions of Tang

1

Tang of Yin asked Ji of Xia, “Did anything exist at the beginning of time?”

Ji of Xia replied, “If there were nothing at the beginning of time, how could there be anything now? If people in the future say nothing existed at this time, would that be right?”

Tang of Yin said, “Then have things no order?”

Ji of Xia said, “The endings and beginnings of things have always been infinite. A beginning may be an end, an end may be a beginning—how can that start be known? So what is outside of things, prior to events, is unknown to me.”

Tang of Yin asked, “So are there limits or ends to the zenith, the nadir, the eight directions?”

Ji said, “I don’t know.” Tang pressed the question. Ji said, “There is no limit to nothing, there is an end to the existent. How should I know?

“But there is no infinity outside the infinite, no endlessness inside the endless. The infinite has no infinity, and the endless has no endlessness. This is how I know there to be the infinite and endless, and don’t know them to have finite limits.”

Tang also asked, “Is there anything beyond the four seas?”

Ji said, “It’s still the central regions.”

Tang asked, “How do you verify this?”

Ji said, “I traveled east to Ying, and the people were like here. When I asked about east of Ying, it was also like Ying. I traveled west to Bing, and the people were like here. When I asked about west of Bing, it was also like Bing. This is how I know the four seas, the four deserts, and the four horizons are not different from here.

“Thus great and small contain each other, endlessly, ad infinitum. Containing all beings is like containing heaven and earth; containing all beings implies endlessness, containing heaven and earth implies infinitude. How can I know there is not a bigger heaven and earth outside this heaven and earth? I don’t know!

“But heaven and earth are still things, and things have flaws. That is why Nu Wa smelted stones of five hues to patch the sky, and cut the legs off a giant tortoise to set up the four corners of the earth. Later on Gonggong fought Zhuanxu for rulership; in their rage they collided with the Incomplete Mountains, broke the pillars of the sky, and snapped the ties of the earth. Because of that the sky tilted northwest, and the sun, moon, planets and stars went with it, while the earth did not fill the southeast, so the rivers all flowed in that direction.”

Tang also asked, “Do things have great and small, long or short, sameness and difference?”

Ji said, “Untold thousands of miles east of the Po Sea, there is an immense abyss, actually a bottomless gorge called the ultimate pool. All the rivers in the world, and all the rain from the sky, flow into it, and yet it never swells or subsides.

“There are five mountains in it: the first is called Daiyu, the second is called Yuanjiao, the third is called Fanghu, the fourth is called Yingzhou, and the fifth is called Penglai. These mountains are thirty thousand miles in height and circumference; the plateaus on their summits extend nine thousand miles. The mountains are seventy thousand miles apart at their closest. The buildings on them are all gold and jade, the birds and beasts on them are all pure white. Trees of pearl and crystal grow in forests on all of them; the flowers and fruits are very flavorful, and those who eat them neither age nor die. The people there are all of races of immortals and sages, with countless numbers of them coming and going by flight in a day and a night.

“But the bases of these five mountains were not attached anywhere; they rose and fell repeatedly with the tides, and couldn’t be stabilized. The immortals and saints, distressed by this, complained to God. God feared they’d drift to the extreme West, causing the abodes of the immortals and

sages to be lost, and therefore commanded the spirit of the north to have fifteen giant turtles raise their heads to hold them up; they did it in three shifts, alternating every sixty thousand years. Only then did the five mountains stand tall and not move.

"However, a giant from the country of Dragon Elders reached the five mountains in a few giant strides, and caught six of the turtles on one hook. Hauling them home on his back, he burnt their shells to practice divination. As a result, two of the mountains, Daiyu and Yuanjiao, drifted to the north pole and sank into the ocean, and countless immortals and saints moved away.

"God was angered, and reduced the territory of the Dragon Elders and shrank the people. In the eras of Fu Xi and Shennong, the people of that land were still several dozen feet tall.

"Four thousand miles east of the central continent is found the country of Jiao Yao, where the people are one foot five inches tall. In the extreme northeast are people called Zheng who are nine inches tall.

"In the south of Xing there is a tree with a spring of five hundred years and an autumn of five hundred years. In high antiquity there was a tree with a spring of eight thousand years and an autumn of eight thousand years. There is a fungus that grows on rot that sprouts in the morning and

dies at night. In the spring and summer months there are insects that are born when it rains and die when exposed to sunlight.

"North of the extreme north there is a vast ocean, which is the Lake of Heaven. There is a fish there thousand of miles wide and correspondingly long, called the *kun.* There is a bird there called the *peng* with wings like clouds covering the sky, and a body to match.

"How do people know these things exist? Great Yu saw them in his travels, Bo Yi recognized and named them, Yi Jian listened and recorded them.

"There is a minute insect called *jiaoming* that lives on the river banks. These can swarm onto the eyelash of a mosquito without bothering it. They remain residing there, coming and going, without the mosquito noticing. Even those with the keenest eyesight could not see their form in the daylight; those with the keenest hearing could not hear their sound at night. Only the Yellow Emperor and the Master of Expanded Development, after fasting together for three months on a mountain, their minds dead and bodies forgotten, eventually saw them, by spiritual vision, as massive as a mountain; they eventually heard them, listening by energy, as loud as thunder.

"In the countries of Wu and Chu there is an evergreen tree called pomelo with a sour red fruit. Consuming its skin and juice will cure

illnesses caused by overexcitement. It was prized in the province of Qi, but when it was brought north across the Huai River it turned into thick-skinned orange there. Mynah birds don't cross the Ji River, badgers die if they cross the Wen River. The climate makes it so. Even so, though their forms and energies differ, they are equal in respect to nature, and not interchangeable. Their lives are complete in themselves, their lots are sufficient unto themselves. How do I know if they're great or small? How do I know if their lives are long or short? How do I know if they're the same or different?"

2

The two mountains Great Form and Royal Residence were hundreds of miles on each side, and one hundred thousand feet tall. Originally they were situated south of Qi province, north of Hoyang. A certain foolish old man of North Mountain, already ninety years old, lived facing the mountains. He was vexed by the mountains blocking the way north, necessitating a long detour to come and go. He gathered his family to come up with a plan. He said, "Why don't we put all our energy into leveling the route through the south of Yu to the region south of the Han River?"

They agreed as a group, but his wife presented a doubt: "With your strength, you couldn't make a dent in a dirt hill—what can you do about

those two immense mountains? And where are you going to put all that earth and rock?"

Everyone said, "Throw it into the Po Sea, north of the Hidden Land."

So he took along three men from among his sons and grandsons to haul loads, and they broke rock, dug earth, and hauled it to the seashore in baskets. The widow of the neighbor family had a young son who eagerly joined them.

It took from winter to summer just to make one round trip. A wise old man at the river bend laughed at them and tried to stop them, saying, "Your lack of intelligence is extreme! With the years and energy you've got left, you'll never be able to break off the stalk of a single plant on the mountain—what can you do about the earth and stone?"

The foolish old man of North Mountain sighed and said, "Your mind is too inflexible to understand, not even as well as the widow's boy. Though I die, my children will survive me; and my children will produce grandchildren, and my grandchildren will have children, and their children will have children, and those grandchildren will have children too. Children and grandchildren will continue to be born generation after generation, while the mountains will never grow larger—so why worry about not leveling the mountains?"

The wise old man of the river bend had no reply.

The spirit in charge of snakes heard this, and fearing the task would never be done, reported it to God. God was moved by their sincerity, and sent two sons of the titan Kua E to transport the two mountains. One was placed in the northeast, the other south of Ying. From then on there was no natural barrier between the south of Ji and the south of the Han River.

3

Father Kua, not assessing his own strength, wanted to chase the sunlight, and pursued it to the horizon. He got so thirsty he drank up the Yellow River and the Wei River. The Yellow River and Wei River weren't sufficient, so he headed north to drink the great lake. Before he arrived, however, he died of thirst on the way. The staff he left behind, infused with the fat and flesh of his body, sprouted the Deng Forest. The Deng Forest is thousands of miles in size.

4

Yu the Great said, "The earth is illumined by the sun and moon, regulated by the stars and planets, ordered by the four seasons, and corresponds to the planet Jupiter. The beings born of spirit differ in form;

some are short-lived, some are long-lived. Only a sage can comprehend the reason."

Qi of Xia said, "But there are also those who are born independent of spirit, formed independent of yin and yang, illumined independent of sun and moon, short-lived without being killed, long-lived without being fostered, eat without needing grain, dress without needing cloth, travel without needing vehicles. Their path is naturally so, not comprehended by sages."

5

While Yu was in the process of quelling the Flood, he lost his way and went to a certain country by mistake. It was on the north edge of the Northern Ocean, untold thousands of miles from China.

That country was called the Ultimate North, and there's no telling where its boundaries were. It had no wind or rain, frost or dew; no birds or beasts lived there, no insects or fish, no plants or trees. It was completely flat in all four directions, and ringed by huge mountain ranges.

There was a mountain in the middle of that country called Bottle Neck, shaped like a bottle, with a round mouth on top, called Opening of Nourishment, from which there flowed a kind of water called miraculous spring water, most fragrant and delicious.

This one spring divided into four streams flowing down the mountain, circulating throughout the whole country, reaching everywhere. The climate was mild, and there was no pestilence.

The people were by nature genial and agreeable, not competitive or contentious. They had soft hearts and weak bones; they were not arrogant, not envious. Older and younger lived as equals, neither ruling nor subjected; males and females associated freely, without matchmaking or betrothal. They lived by the water, without plowing or planting; the climate was mild and agreeable, so they didn't spin and didn't wear clothes. They died when they were a hundred years old, never dying young or falling ill.

The people multiplied prolifically and the population was huge, beyond counting; they had joy and pleasure, without the sorrow and pain of deterioration with age.

Their custom was to enjoy singing, and groups of them would take turns singing all day long. When they got hungry or tired, they'd drink some of the miraculous spring water, and they'd be refreshed in body and mind. If they drank too much they'd get intoxicated, and it would take ten days to sober up. When they bathed in the miraculous spring water, their skin would become lustrous and fragrant for ten days.

When King Mu of Zhou journeyed north he passed through that country, and forgot to return for three years. When he did get back to the

House of Zhou, he longed for that country so much that he became distracted and absent-minded. He didn't partake of wine or meat, and didn't call for his concubines. It was months before he came back to himself.

When Guan Zhong urged Duke Huan of Qi to make the distant journey with him to that country, when they were about to get underway Xi Peng objected, "Your lordship is leaving the immensity of the state of Qi, the enormity of its population, the beauty of its mountains and rivers, the abundance of its flora, the maturity of its rites and principles, the aesthetics of its formal attire, the beautiful women filling the palace, the loyal men filling the court. You can muster a million troops with a shout, you can order the lords about just by giving them a look. So what can you possibly find so attractive about that place that you'd abandon your homeland for a foreign country? This fellow Guan Zhong is senile—how can you go along with him?"

So Duke Huan gave up the idea, and told Guan Zhong what Xi Peng had said. Guan Zhong said, "This is definitely beyond Peng. I'm afraid it's the uncertainty about that country. Why be attached to the wealth of Qi? Why pay attention to the words of Xi Peng?"

People in southern countries cut their hair and go naked; people in northern countries wear turbans and leather garments; people in temperate countries wear hats and clothing of fabric.

As for what the nine lands provide, some are agricultural, some commercial; some are hunters and some are fishers. Like wearing leather in winter and silk in summer, traveling by boat on water and by car on land, it goes without saying, turning out that way naturally.

East of Yue there is the country Zhemu, where they dismember and eat their first born, thinking that will enable them to have many sons. When their grandfathers die, they carry their grandmothers off and abandon them, saying, “The wife of a ghost can’t live with us.”

South of Chu there is the country of Yanran. When their parents die, they strip off the flesh and bury the bones; only then can they be considered filial sons.

West of Qin there is the country of Yiqu. When their parents die, they pile up firewood and cremate them. As the smoke rises, they call this going to heaven. Then they qualify as filial sons.

Made into policies by rulers, these are made into customs by subjects, and so nothing to wonder at.

When Confucius was traveling in the East, he saw two children arguing and asked what it was about.

One child said, “I think the sun is closer to us when it rises, and further away at noon.”

The other child thought the sun further away when it rises and closer at noon.

The first child said, “When the sun first rises, it’s big as a parasol, but at noon it’s the size of a disk—isn’t this because things far away seem smaller, and things nearby seem bigger?”

The other child said, “It’s cool at sunrise, but hot at midday—isn’t this because it’s hotter when the sun is nearer and cooler when it’s further away?”

Confucius couldn’t decide. The children laughed at him, “Who says you know a lot?”

8

Equilibrium is the ultimate principle on earth; everything in the domain of form is thus. Hairs of equal length will bear weight hung equally on them; if the weight on them is different and they snap, it means that the hairs are not equal in length. If they are equal, even those that would otherwise snap do not break.

People think it is not so, but there have naturally been those who realized it is so. Zhan He made a fishing line out of a single strand of silk, used a prickle from a beard of grain for a hook, took a cane of dwarf bamboo for a rod, and split a grain of rice for bait. With this he caught a cartload of fish from a depth of a hundred fathoms, casting into the current without the line snapping, the hook straightening, or the rod bending.

The King of Chu heard of this and considered it a marvel. He summoned the man and asked him how he did it. Zhan He said, "I heard my late father speak of the archery of an ancient bird hunter, using arrows with strings attached. He used a weak bow and a delicate string, but he shot with the wind, bagging a pair of orioles at the edge of the blue clouds. His focused his attention undivided, and he moved his hands in balance.

"I learned fishing by imitating that example. It took me five years to master the method. When I am at the riverside holding my fishing pole, there are no random thoughts in my mind, only thought of fish; when I cast my line and sink my hook, there's no resistance in my hands, so nothing can cause any disturbance. Fish see the bait on my hook like sinking dust or a bunch of froth, and swallow it without hesitation. Thus I can control strength by weakness, bring in the heavy by means of the light. If Your Majesty could really govern the country like this, then the empire could be operated with one hand. What else would you have to do?"

The King of Chu said, “Good!”

9

When Gong Hu of Lu and Qi Ying of Zhao fell ill, they both sought a cure from Pian Qiao.

Pian Qiao cured them. Once they had recovered, he said to Gong Hu and Qi Ying, “The sickness you suffered was something from outside that affected your internal organs, so it could be eliminated by medicine. Now you have a disease that you were born with and has grown along with your bodies. How about if I treat you for it now?”

The two men said, “Let us first hear the symptoms.”

Pian Qiao said, to Gong Hu, “Your will is strong, while your energy is weak, so you can plan adequately but are lacking in resolution. Qi Ying has a weak will but his energy is strong, so he’s lacking in thought while excessive in persistence. If you exchange hearts, that will balance your qualities.”

Pian Qiao then had the two men drink a toxic liquor that put them into a coma for three days. He cut open their chests, took out their hearts, and exchanged them. Then he administered a miraculous drug, and they woke up.

Taking their leave, the two went home. But now Gong Hu went to Qi Ying's house and tried to assert authority over his wife and children. The wife and children didn't acknowledge him. Qi Ying, for his part, went to Gong Hu's house and asserted authority over his wife and children. The wife and children didn't acknowledge him either.

The two families sued each other, and demanded an explanation from Pian Qiao. Pian Qiao explained the reason, so the lawsuits were dropped.

10

When Pao Ba played the lute, birds danced and fish frolicked. When Music Master Wen of Zheng heard of this, he left home to follow Music Master Xiang. Tuning his instrument, he didn't play a piece for three years. Master Xiang said, "You can go home."

Master Wen set aside his lute and lamented, "It's not that I can't tune it, and not that I can't play a piece. What I have in mind is not in the strings, my intent is not in the sound. Inwardly I can't find it in my mind, outwardly it doesn't resonate in the instrument; so I don't dare try to play. Give me a little more time, to see what's next."

In no time at all he came back to see Master Xiang. Master Xiang said, "How is your lute?"

Master Wen said, “I’ve got it. Here’s a sample for you.” At that time it was spring, but he plucked the metallic notes to evoke the key of autumn, whereupon a cool breeze suddenly came, and the fruits of the plants and trees were fully developed. Come autumn, he plucked the wooden notes to produce the key of spring, and a warm breeze slowly swirled, and the plants and trees burst into bloom. In summer, he plucked the water notes to produce the key of winter, whereupon frost and snow fell, the rivers and lakes suddenly froze. When winter came, he plucked the fire notes to produce the key of summer, whereupon the sunlight burned fiercely and solid ice melted instantly. As he was concluding, he played all four strings in the designated keys, and an auspicious breeze swirled, felicitous clouds floated, sweet dew descended, and delicious springs bubbled up.

Impressed, Master Xiang said with enthusiasm, “Your playing is refined indeed! Even the pure notes of Master Guang and the pitch of Zou Yan have nothing to add to this. They would simply have to pack up their lute and pipes and follow after you.”

11

Tan of Xue studied singing with Qing of Qin. Thinking he’d mastered Qing’s art before he really had, Tan took leave to go back home. Qing didn’t try to stop him, but as a parting gift at the highway outside the

city he sang a sad song. His voice made the trees in the forest vibrate; the resonance halted passing clouds.

Now Tan of Xue apologized and sought to return, never presuming to speak of going back home for the rest of his life.

Qing of Qin turned and said to his companions, “Long ago when E of Han went east to Qi, she ran out of supplies, so when she passed the Gate of Harmony into Qi she sold songs for food. After she’d gone, lingering notes wound around the roof beams for three whole days, so the people around thought she hadn’t left.

“She went by an inn, but the people at the inn insulted her. So E of Han cried mournfully, in long, drawn-out tones. Everyone in the neighborhood, old and young, was saddened; looking at each other with tears in their eyes, they couldn’t eat for three days. Finally they went after her. E came back and sang again, drawing out the notes, a long song. Everyone in the neighborhood, old and young, jumped for joy, clapping and dancing, unable to restrain themselves, forgetting their earlier sadness. Then they saw her off with plenty of gifts.

“For this reason, the people of the Gate of Harmony are good at singing and keening to this day, emulating the tradition of voicing left by E.”

12

Bo Ya was good at playing the lute. Zhong Ziqi was good at listening. When Bo Ya played the lute with his mind on climbing high mountains, Zhong Ziqi said, “Wow! High on Mount Tai!” When Bo Ya’s mind was on flowing water, Zhong Ziqi said, “Wow! Vast as the Yangzi and Yellow Rivers!” Whatever Bo Ya thought of, Zhong Ziqi would always get it.

When Bo Ya journeyed to the north peak of Mount Tai, he suddenly got caught in a storm and stayed under a cliff. Feeling melancholy, he played his lute. First he composed a lament on continuous rain, then he recreated the sound of an avalanche.

When he performed each of these pieces, Zhong Ziqi comprehended their sense at once. Bo Ya then put his lute down and said with a sigh, “Your listening is very skillful indeed! The intent, conception, and image are like my mind—where can I conceal my voice?”

13

When King Mu of Zhou went West touring, he crossed the Kunlun Mountains to Mount Yan [where the sun was thought to set]. On his way back, before reaching China, by the roadside there was an artisan named Yan, to whom King Mu granted an audience.

“What skills do you have?” inquired the King.

“I’ll try whatever the King commands,” replied Maestro Yan, “but I’ve already made something, which I hope the King will look at first.”

King Mu said, “Bring it tomorrow, and I’ll look at it with you.”

The next day Maestro Yan visited the King. Granting him an audience, the King asked, “Who is this accompanying you?”

Maestro Yan replied, “It’s a performer I’ve created.”

King Mu looked at it with astonishment. Its movements and gestures were those of a real human being. When the artisan pressed its cheek, it sang in tune; when he raised its hand, it danced in rhythm. It did all sorts of things, whatever one wished. The King thought it was a real human being, and watched it with his Queen and concubines.

When the performance was over, the performer winked seductively at the concubines surrounding the King. The King was enraged; he wanted to execute Maestro Yan at once. Terrified, Maestro Yan immediately cut the performer into pieces to show the King it was made of a conglomeration of leather, wood, glue, lacquer, and colors.

The King examined it carefully. Inside were liver and gall bladder, heart and lungs, spleen and kidneys, intestines and stomach. Outside were tendons and bones, limbs and joints, skin and down, teeth and hair. They were all artificial, but all there.

Reassembled, it was restored to the way it was when he first saw it. As an experiment, the King removed the heart, whereupon the mouth could not speak. He removed the liver, whereupon the eyes could not see. He removed the kidneys, whereupon the legs could not walk.

Now King Mu was pleased. He said admiringly, "Can human skill achieve the same effects as the Creator?" Calling for his second car, he had the thing loaded onto it to carry it back to China.

Well, Pan Yu's ladder to the clouds and Mo Di's hang glider they themselves considered the epitome of skill, but when their disciples heard tell of Master Yan's skill, they reported this to the two masters. The two masters never presumed to speak of art again for the rest of their lives, though they took up the compass and square at times.

14

Gan Ying was an expert archer of old. When he drew his bow, animals lay prostrate and birds came down. His disciple, named Fei Wei, studied archery with Gan Ying, and his skill surpassed his teacher.

A certain Ji Chang then studied archery with Fei Wei. Fei Wei told him, "First learn not to blink; then we can talk about archery."

Ji Chang went home and lay face up under his wife's loom, such that his eyes were in line with the treadle. After two years, he wouldn't

blink even with an awl poking at his wide-open eye. He went and told Fei Wei.

Fei Wei said, “Not yet. Now you’ll have to learn looking. Tell me when you see the small as if it were large, and see the minute as if it were distinct.”

Chang hung a louse by a hair in his window, and looked at it facing south. In ten days it gradually grew larger; after three years it seemed as big as a cartwheel. Now when he looked at other things this way, they were all mountainous. Then, using a horn bow and a cane arrow, he shot the louse through the head without snapping the thread on which it hung.

He told Fei Wei about this. Fei Wei enthusiastically declared, “You’ve got it!”

Now that Ji Chang had mastered Fei Wei’s art, he reckoned he was the only one in the world who could rival him. So he plotted to kill Fei Wei.

Meeting in an open field, the two men shot at each other: their arrow points met in mid-air and the arrows fell to the ground, yet the dust didn’t stir.

Fei Wei ran out of arrows first. Ji Cheng had one arrow left; he shot, but Fei Wei stopped it with the tip of a thorn, with perfect accuracy.

Now the two masters threw down their bows weeping and bowed to each other on the road. Adopting each other as father and son, they made a solemn oath never to teach the art to anyone.

15

The charioteer Zaofu's teacher was Mr. Taitou. When Zaofu began to learn chariot driving from him, he was strictly courteous and very humble, but Taitou didn't tell him anything for three years. Zaofu became even more punctilious in his manners, until Taitou finally told him, "An ancient poem says, 'The son of a good bow maker must first make baskets; the son of a good smith must first make bellows.' First watch me run. When you can run like me, then you can hold six bridles and control six horses."

Taitou then set up a line of wooden posts, each just big enough for a foot, placed a pace apart. Stepping on these, he ran back and forth without stumbling or slipping.

Zaofu practiced this, and mastered the skill in three days. Taitou praised him, "How adroit you are! You got it so quickly! Charioteering is also like this—as you were running just now, you found it in your feet, responding to it in your mind. Applying this to charioteering, you equalize

the team at the border of bridle and bit, adjust speed where the lips join, regulate measure at the center of the chest, and keep pace in your grip.

"By mastering it inwardly in the innermost mind, while outwardly according with the will of the horses, it is thus possible to go back and forth on a straight line, turn around with precision, and go long distances with energy to spare, having truly attained the art.

"What you feel in the bit, respond to with the bridle; what you feel in the bridle, respond to with your hands; what you feel in your hands, respond to in your mind. Then you don't use your eyes to look, don't use your whip to drive; your mind is at ease, your body's upright, the six bridles don't tangle, and twenty-four hooves don't miss a step. Wheeling around, going back and forth, all are perfectly orderly.

"After that, even if the track is no wider than your wheels, and there's no ground beyond your horses' hooves, you never sense the steepness of the mountains and valleys, or the flatness of the plains and marshes, seeing them as one. This is the consummation of my art. Take note of it!"

Hei Luan of Wei killed Qiu Pingzhang out of personal enmity. Qiu Pingzhang's son Laidan planned to avenge his father's murder.

Laidan's temper was very fierce, but physically he was very slight; he ate rice by the grain and went along with the wind when he ran. Even in anger he couldn't handle a weapon to strike back. He was ashamed to rely on another's power, and vowed to wield the sword himself to slay Hei Luan.

Hei Luan was extraordinarily cruel and ruthless, and he had the strength of a hundred men. His sinews and bones, skin and muscles, were not like those of a human: he could take a sword to the neck and an arrow to the chest, and the blade would bend and the point would break, while his body remained unscathed. Proud of his physical strength, he looked upon Laidan as like a chick.

Laidan's friend Shen Ta said, "Your hatred for Laiduan is total, while his contempt for you is extreme. What is your strategy for handling him?"

Weeping, Laiduan said, "Please devise a strategy for me."

Shen Ta said, "I've heard of Kong Zhou of Wei that his ancestor obtained the jade swords of the Emperor of Yin. A single boy armed with them can repulse the troops of three armies—why don't you ask him for them?"

So Laiduan went to Wei and met Kong Zhou. In a humble manner, he first asked him to take his wife and children, then said what he wanted.

Kong Zhou said, “I have three swords from which you may choose. None of them can kill a man, but let me first describe them.

“One is called ‘imbued with light.’ You cannot see it when you look at it, and you don’t sense it’s there when you wield it. It leaves no cut where it strikes, passing through someone without their even noticing.

“The second is called ‘shadowed.’ If you look at it facing north in the dawn or dusk twilight there vaguely seems to be something there, but no one can discern its appearance. There is a faint sound when it strikes, but it goes through people without their feeling pain.

“The third is called ‘tempered by night.’ In the daytime you can see its shadow but not its shine; at night you can see its shine but not its shadow. Where it strikes, it slices through, but the wound closes right up as the blade passes, so it feels painful but doesn’t bloody the blade.

“These three treasures have been passed on for thirteen generations, but have never actually been used. I’ve kept them sheathed and stored, never once breaking the seals.”

Laidan said, “Even so, I must ask for the least of them.”

Kong Zhong then returned his wife and children and fasted with him for seven days, then at twilight he knelt down and presented him with the

least of the swords. Laidan prostrated himself twice, accepted it, and went back home with it.

Laidan then went after Hei Luan sword in hand. At the time Hei Luan was lying drunk under a window. Laidan slashed him thrice from his neck to his waist. Hei Luan didn't wake up.

Thinking Hei Luan was dead, Laidan beat a hasty retreat. Running into Hei Luan's son at the gate, he struck at him thrice, but it was like hitting empty space.

Hei Luan's son laughed and said, "Why are you fooling with me this way, beckoning me thrice?"

Laidan realized the sword couldn't kill people, so he went home lamenting.

When Hei Luan woke up, he got angry at his wife. He said, "Leaving me uncovered while I was drunk, you've caused me to come down with a sore throat and pain in the waist."

His son said, "When Laidan came a while ago, he met me at the gate and beckoned me three times; it's made my body ache and my limbs stiff too. He must have put a curse on us!"

When King Mu of Zhou made a major expedition against peoples of the West, the peoples of the West presented him with a special dagger and asbestos cloth. The dagger was eighteen inches long, made of tempered steel, with a red edge. It could cut through jade like cutting through mud. As for the asbestos cloth, it had to be put in fire to be laundered; the cloth would turn the color of fire, while the grime would turn the color of cloth. When taken out of the fire and shaken, the cloth would be white as snow.

The crown prince thought there were no such things, and that those who told of them were mistaken. Xiao Shu said, “The prince is ultimately fixated on his own belief, consequently repudiating truth.”

VI. Effort and Destiny

1

Effort said to Destiny, “How can your effect compare to mine?”

Destiny said, “What effect do you have on beings that can compare to mine?”

Effort said, “Long life or premature death, failure or success, nobility or abasement, poverty or prosperity—this is what I, effort, am capable of.”

Destiny said, “The wisdom of Grandfather Peng was not superior to Yao or Shun, yet he lived to be eight hundred years old. The talent of Yan Yuan was not inferior to common people, yet he only lived to be eighteen. The virtue of Confucius was not less than the lords, yet he was blockaded between Chen and Cai. The conduct of King Zhou of Yin was not better than the Three Humanitarians, yet he occupied the position of ruler.

“Ji Cha, [though known for intelligence], never had any rank in Wu, whereas Tian Huang [a briber and assassin] monopolized the state of Qi. [Loyalists] Yi and Qi starved to death on Shouyang, while the Ji clan grew richer than [the moralist] Liu Xiahui.

“If this is your doing, Effort, why lengthen one’s life while shortening another’s? Why cast sages in desperate straits while granting

perverts success? Why debase the intelligent and ennoble the foolish? Why impoverish the good and enrich the evil?"

Effort said, "If things are as you say, then I certainly have no effect on people. So if people are like this, is this under your control?"

Destiny said, "Once you call it destiny, how can there be anyone controlling it? I push it along when it is straight, let it go when it twists and turns. One naturally lives long or naturally dies young, naturally becomes desperate or naturally attains success, is naturally ennobled or naturally abased, naturally prospers or is naturally impoverished. How can I know why? How can I know why?"

2

Beigongzi said to Ximenzi, "We are peers, but you are the one people have helped to succeed; we are of the same clan, yet you are the one people respect; we are of similar appearance, yet you are the one people admire; we are equally eloquent, yet you are the one people employ; our conduct is the same, yet you are the one people trust; our offices are equal, yet you are the one people honor; our farms are equal, yet you are the one people enrich; our commerce is equal, yet you are the one people profit. I wear poor clothes, eat simple food, live in a reed cottage, and travel on foot; you wear brocade, eat polished rice and filleted meat, live in a big house,

and travel with a team of four horses. At home you gladly ignore me, at court you plainly show contempt for me. It's been years since we visited one another or went out together. Do you think your virtue superior to mine?"

Ximenzi said, "I have no way to know whether that's true, but you fail at things while I succeed—isn't this evidence of disparity in our endowments? Yet you consider yourself equal to me in every way—you're certainly brazen!"

Beigongzi had no reply; he went home dejected. On the way he met Master Dongguo. The master asked, "Where have you been, that you are returning walking alone with a look of profound shame?"

Beigongzi told him what had happened.

Master Dongguo said, "I will relieve your shame; I'll go back to Ximenzi with you and question him."

He said, "Tell me, why did you humiliate Beigongzi so deeply?"

Ximenzi said, "Beigongzi said he was equal to me in family status, age and appearance, speech and conduct, yet different from me in rank and riches. I told him that I had no way of knowing the truth of the matter, but he fails at things where I succeed, and perhaps this is evidence of difference in endowment; so for him to say he's my equal in everything is impudence on his part."

Master Dongguo said, “When you speak of difference in endowment, you’re only talking about differences in talent and virtue. The difference in endowment of which I speak is otherwise. Beigongzi is rich in virtue, poor in fate; you are rich in fate, poor in virtue. Your success is not obtained by wisdom, while Beigongzi’s failures are not by way of mistakes due to folly. Both are from Nature, not humankind; so your pride in richness of fate and Beigongzi’s shame at richness of virtue both fail to recognize a pattern of necessity.”

Ximenzi said, “Master, stop! I dare say no more.”

After Beigongzi returned home, when he wore his cotton and wool clothing it was as warm as leather and fur; when he ate his beans, they were as tasty as polished rice; when he sheltered in his reed hut, it protected him like a mansion; when he rode his wicker cart, it was as fancy as a decorated carriage. At ease for the rest of his life, he was not aware of glory or disgrace in himself or in others.

Hearing of this, Master Dongguo said, “Beigongzi had been asleep for a long time, but he was able to wake up at a single statement. He was easily enlightened!”

Guan Yiwu and Bao Shuya were very close friends. They both lived in Qi. Guan Yiwu attended the duke's son Jiu, while Bao Shuya attended the duke's son Xiaobo.

There was a lot of favoritism in the clan of the duke of Qi, and his sons by his wife and concubines had equal standing. The citizens feared a civil war. Guan Yiwu and Shao Hu fled to Lu in the service of the duke's son Jiu, while Bao Shuya fled to Ju in the service of the duke's son Xiaobo.

Subsequently Gongsun Wuzhi attempted a coup; Qi had no legitimate ruler, and the two sons of the Duke fought to take over. Guan Yiwu battled Xiaobo in Ju, during the course of which he shot an arrow that hit Xiaobo's belt buckle.

After Xiaobo had been established as Duke Huan, he intimidated Lu into killing his brother Jiu; Shao Hu committed suicide on that account, and Guan Yiwu was imprisoned.

Bao Shuya said to Duke Huan, "Guan Yiwu is capable; he can govern the state."

Duke Huan said, "He is my enemy; I want to kill him."

Bao Shuya said, "I have heard that an intelligent ruler has no private grudges. If someone can work for his employer, he can certainly work for his ruler. If you want hegemony or kingship, you cannot succeed without Yiwu. You must release him!"

In the end the Duke called for Guan Zhong (Yiwu), and the state of Lu returned him to the state of Qi. Bao Shuya greeted him outside the city and removed his fetters. Duke Huan treated him with courtesy and put him in a position higher than the leading Gao and Guo families. Bao Shuya subordinated himself to him. Entrusted with the administration of the state, he was dubbed Father Zhong. Duke Huan subsequently became Overlord.

Guan Zhong once said in praise, “When I was in straits in my youth, Bao Shu and I were once business partners. When it came to dividing the money I gave more to myself, but Bao Shu didn’t consider me greedy because he knew I was poor. When I used to plan enterprises for Bao Shu I went bankrupt, but Bao Shu didn’t consider me stupid, because he knows that times may be opportune or inopportune. I served in office three times and was discharged all three times by the ruler, yet Bao Shu didn’t consider me unworthy, because he knew my time hadn’t come. I went to war three times and fled all three times, yet Bao Shu didn’t consider me cowardly, because he knew I had an elderly mother. When the duke’s son Jiu was destroyed and Shao Hu committed suicide on his account, I accepted imprisonment and disgrace, but Bao Shu didn’t consider me shameless, because he knew that instead of being ashamed over a minor sense of duty I was ashamed of not being distinguished throughout the land. The ones who gave me life were my parents, but the one who knows me is Bao Shu.”

With this it is customary to cite Guan and Bao as examples of skill in association, and Xiaobo as an example of skill in employing the capable. But there was really no skill in association, really no skill in employing the capable; yet it is not that there is greater skill in association, not that there is greater skill in employing the capable. Shao Hu did not commit suicide by virtue of his capability; he had no choice but to die. Bao Shu did not recommend a savant by virtue of his own competence; he had no choice but to recommend a savant. Xiaobo did not employ an enemy because he was skillful; he had no choice but to employ an enemy.

When Guan Zhong became ill, Xiaobo inquired of him, “Your illness is serious, Father Zhong, and may be fatal. If you become critically ill, who should I entrust with the state?”

Guan Zhong said, “Who do you want?”

Xiaobo said, “Bao Shuya will do.”

“No, he won’t. He is so puritanical that he won’t associate with anyone unlike himself, and once he’s heard of a fault in a person he never forgets it all his life. If you let him administer the state, he’ll be investigating the ruler above and imposing on the people below. It wouldn’t be long before he’d be punished by the ruler.”

Xiaobo said, “Then who will do?”

“If there’s no alternative, then Xi Peng will do. He is the sort of man whom superiors forget about and inferiors do not disobey. He is ashamed of not being comparable to the Yellow Emperor, and feels compassion for those who are not comparable to him.

“Those who distribute virtue to others are called sages; those who distribute wealth to others are called savants. Those who use sagacity to lord over others have never won people, while those who use sagacity to humble themselves to others have never failed to win people—regarding the state, there is that which they don’t hear; and regarding the home, there is that which they don’t see. If there is no other choice, then Xi Peng will do.”

But Guan Yiwu was not slighting Bao Shu—he could not but slight him. He was not favoring Xi Peng—he could not but favor him. When you favor someone at first, you may wind up slighting them; when you slight someone at first, you may wind up favoring them. The going and coming of favoring and slighting do not derive from oneself.

4

Deng Xi manipulated ambiguous propositions to set forth inexhaustible rhetoric. He wrote the criminal code applied by the state of Zheng when Zichan was in charge of government; he repeatedly criticized

Zichan's administration, and Zichan yielded to him. Then Zichan had him arrested and disgraced, and summarily executed.

So Zichan applied the criminal code, not because he could, but because he had to. Deng Xi restrained Zichan, not because he could, but because he had to. Zichan executed Deng Xi, not because he could, but because he had to.

5

To live when you can live is a blessing from Nature. To die when you should die is a blessing from Nature. Not living when you can live is a penalty from Nature. Not dying when you should die is a penalty from Nature. To be able to live and ready to die, then to live and to die, sometimes happens; to die when it's right to live and live when it's right to die sometimes happens. But what gives life to the living and death to the dying is not a thing and not self; it is all destiny, about which intelligence can do nothing.

So it is said,

Mysterious and boundless, the course of Nature organizes itself;

Silent and undivided, the course of Creation operates itself.

Sky and earth cannot impinge upon it; sages' knowledge cannot affect it,

Ghosts and spirits cannot deceive it.

That which is naturally so silently accomplishes it,

Balances it and stabilizes it, sends it off and welcomes it.

6

Yang Zhu's friend Ji Liang got sick, and worsened for seven days. His sons surrounded him and wept over him, calling for physicians.

Ji Liang said to Yang Zhu, "This is how disgraceful my sons are! Why don't you compose a song for me to enlighten them?"

Yang Zhu sang,

Even God does not know—

How can humanity realize?

It's not that blessings come from God,

Nor do curses come from Man.

Me? You? We don't know!

Doctors? Shamans? How would they know?

But the sons didn't understand, and wound up consulting three physicians, one named Jiao, one named Yu, and one named Lu, who tried to diagnose the illness.

Mr. Jiao told Ji Liang, "Your cold and warmth are unregulated, emptiness and fullness are out of order. Your sickness comes from

overeating and lustfulness, such that your vitality and thought are troubled and scattered. It is neither divine nor demonic. Although it's progressing, it can be cured."

Ji Liang said, "This is a common doctor—dismiss him at once!"

Mr. Yu said, "You were lacking in energy from the first, even in the womb, and had too much breast milk. This illness didn't happen overnight, but came about gradually. It can't be cured."

Ji Liang said, "This is a good doctor—feed him, at least."

Mr. Lu said, "Your illness doesn't come from Heaven or from humans, nor indeed from ghosts. As we are endowed with life and embodied, since there is that which regulates them, there must be that which governs them. What can herbs and needles do for you?"

Ji Liang said, "This is a spiritual doctor—send him home with a rich reward."

In no time at all Ji Liang's illness spontaneously healed.

7

Life cannot be preserved by valuing it, the body cannot be taken care of by cherishing it. Life cannot be shortened by despising it either, nor can the body be neglected by disregarding it.

So you may not survive even if you value life, and may not die even if you despise it. Cherishing the body may not take care of it, while disregarding it may not be neglect.

This seems contradictory, but it is not; it's a matter of living naturally and dying naturally, caring naturally and neglecting naturally.

Then again, you may live by valuing it, or die by despising it; you may take care by cherishing, or fall into neglect by disregard. This seems logical, but it is not; this too is living naturally and dying naturally, caring naturally and neglecting naturally.

Yu Xiong said to King Wen, "Natural longevity is not an addition; natural brevity is not a diminution. What is lost by calculating?"

Lao Ran said to the Keeper of the Pass, "Who knows the reasons for Creation's disapproval?"

So it's better not to look to the divine will and try to figure out gain and loss.

8

Yang Bu asked, "Here are people quite similar in age, property, talent, and appearance, yet quite different in longevity, status, reputation, and inclination. I'm confused by this."

Master Yang Zhu said, “People of ancient times had a saying; I have memorized it, and I’ll tell you—*What is so without anyone knowing why it is so is destiny.*

“In the present obscurity and confusion, whatever is done or undone, the days come and go, but who can know the reason? It’s all destiny.

“Those who trust destiny are oblivious of long life or early death; those who trust intrinsic order are oblivious of affirmation and negation; those who trust mind are oblivious of opposition and accord; those who trust nature are oblivious of safety and danger. This is called being entirely oblivious of objects of belief, entirely oblivious of objects of disbelief. This is true, this is genuine; why reject; why embrace? Why lament, why rejoice? Why act, why refrain?

“A book of the Yellow Emperor says, ‘Perfected people are as if dead when at rest, like a machine in action. They don’t even know why they’re at rest, and don’t even know why they’re not at rest; they don’t even know why they act, and don’t even know why they don’t act. They don’t change their inner states or outward appearances because people are watching, and they don’t change their inner states or outward appearances when they think no one is watching. They come and go on their own, they appear and disappear on their own. Who can block their way?’”

Ink Piss, Fanatic, Lazy, and Hasty traveled the world together, each doing as he liked. To the end of their years they never knew each others' state of mind, as each one thought his own wisdom most profound.

Tricky, Simple, Artless, and Fawning traveled the world together, each doing as he liked. To the end of their years they never spoke to each other, as each one thought his own skill most subtle.

Withdrawn, Candid, Stammerer, and Scold traveled the world together, each doing as he liked. To the end of their years they never understood each other, as each one thought his own talent adequate.

Con-Man, Buck-Passer, Bold, and Timid traveled the world together, each doing as he liked. To the end of their years they never criticized each other, because each one thought his own conduct unobjectionable.

Conformist, Individualist, Opportunist, and Independent traveled the world together, each doing as he liked. To the end of their years they never paid attention to each other, each one thinking himself in harmony with the times.

These are a multiplicity of attitudes. They are not the same in appearance, but all are alike in saying it was their destiny.

Fortuitous success seems like success but is not success at all. Fortuitous failure seems like failure, but is not failure at all.

So confusion produces semblance, and the boundaries of semblance are obscure. If you are not muddled in the midst of the seeming, then you will not be alarmed by external calamities and will not rejoice over internal blessings; acting according to the time, inactive according to the time, you are inscrutable even to savants.

Those who trust destiny do not have different attitudes towards others and self. Those with different attitudes toward other and self would be better off covering their eyes and blocking their ears so they won't totter and fall even if there's a cliff behind them and an empty moat in front of them.

So it is said that death and life come from destiny, poverty and riches depend on the times. Those who resent early death are those who do not know destiny; those who resent poverty are those who do not know the times. To be unafraid in face of death and undisturbed in straits is a matter of knowing destiny and resting content with the times.

Suppose people with a lot of intelligence calculate gain and loss, weigh falsehood and truth, and assess people's states of mind; they'll

succeed half the time and fail half the time. People with little intelligence don't calculate gain and loss, don't weigh falsehood and truth, and don't assess people's states of mind, yet they too succeed half the time and fail half the time. Calculating or not calculating, weighing or not weighing, assessing or not assessing—what's the difference? Only when there is nothing calculated and nothing not calculated is there completeness, without loss. Yet it is not a matter of completeness through knowledge, nor loss through knowledge. It is inherent completeness, spontaneous oblivion, and natural loss.

11

When Duke Jing of Qi traveled to Ox Mountain, he gazed northward on his capital city and wept. "What a beautiful country," he said, "green and growing so richly! How is it that I must leave this land with the flow of time and die? If there were no death, where would I go from here?"

Shi Kong and Liang Qiuju both wept along with him. "We are dependent upon your grace—we can only get coarse grain and poor meat to eat, and can only have ordinary horses and simple carts to ride, and yet even at that we don't want to die—how much less our lord!"

Yanzi alone stood aside, laughing. The Duke wiped away his tears, looked at Yanzi, and said, "Kong and Ju are both weeping along with me in

this sadness of journeying I feel today. Why are you laughing by yourself?"

Yanzi replied, "If savants could keep this forever, then Taigong and Duke Huan would have kept it forever. If stalwarts could keep this forever, then Duke Zhuang and Duke Ling would have kept it forever. With several lords to look after this, you then, my lord, would be standing in the fields in reed raingear, worried only about work—how would you have time to worry about death?

"And how did you get your position anyway? Because of successive occupation and departure. Now that it's come to you, for you to be the only one to weep over it is inhumane. When we see an inhumane ruler, we see flattering ministers. When I saw these two, that's why I was laughing to myself."

Duke Jing was ashamed. Raising his goblet, he penalized himself. He penalized the two ministers two goblets each.

12

Among the population of Wei there was a certain Dongmen Wu. His son died, but he wasn't sad. His wife said, "No one in the world loved a son as you did; now he's dead, so why aren't you sad?"

Dongmen Wu said, "I had no son before. When I had no son I wasn't sad; now that my son is dead, it's the same as before when I had no

son. Why should I grieve?”

13

Farmers follow the seasons, merchants head for profit, artisans pursue skills, officials go after power. Conditions dictate this. However, farmers experience flood and drought, merchants may gain or lose, artisans may succeed or fail, officials may or may not get opportunities. Destiny dictates this.

VII. Yang Zhu

1

Yang Zhu traveled to Lu, where he lodged with the Meng family.

Mr. Meng asked, “People are just what they are—what’s the use of reputation?”

“Those who can make use of reputation get rich.”

“Once they’ve gotten rich, why don’t they stop?”

“They use it for status.”

“Once they’re respectable, why don’t they stop?”

“On account of death.”

“Once they’re dead, what’s the use?”

“For their descendants.”

“How can reputation benefit descendants?”

“People undergo stress and strain for fame, but if they can take advantage of it the benefits extend to the clan, the advantages extend to neighbors and friends—how much the more their direct descendants!”

“Whoever strives for good results must be honest, but honesty means poverty. Whoever strives for good repute must be deferential, but deference means lowliness.”

“When Guan Zhong was prime minister of Qi, he partied when the lord partied, and lived in luxury when the lord lived in luxury. United in

mind and concurring in speech, his policies were effective and the state became dominant. But after he died, the Guan family faded out. When Mr. Tian was prime minister of Qi, he humbled himself when the lord was inflated, and he was generous when the lord was stingy. The people were all loyal to him, and because of this he owned the state of Qi and his descendants have enjoyed this all the way up to the present day."

"It seems that real fame leads to poverty, whereas artificial fame leads to wealth.

"Reality has no fame, fame has no reality. Fame is entirely artificial. In ancient times Yao and Shun pretended to abdicate to Xu You and Shan Juan, but they didn't lose the realm, and reigned for a hundred years. Bo Yi and Shou Qi really did abdicate the throne of Guzhu and wound up losing the state and dying of starvation on Mt. Shouyang. This is how clear the distinction between reality and falsehood is."

2

Yang Zhu said, "The general limit of life span is a hundred years, but hardly one in a thousand actually lives a hundred years. Even if there is one who does, nearly half of that is taken up by infancy and senility. What is spent in sleep at night or overlooked while awake by day also takes nearly half of what's left. Pain and sickness, sorrow and suffering, loss,

worry, and fear also take up nearly half of what's left. Out of the ten or so years left over, figure how much is unburdened and content, with no preoccupying worries—not even an hour!

"So what are people to do with their lives? What is there to enjoy? They strive for fine food and clothing, for music and beauties, but they cannot always be sated with fine food and clothing, and they cannot always be dallying with music and beauties. They are also inhibited and encouraged by penalties and rewards, controlled by conventions and laws. They compete restlessly for empty fame in their time, counting on continuing glory after death. They go along minding what their eyes and ears see and hear, caring only about what their bodies and minds approve or disapprove. Missing out on the supreme happiness of the present, they cannot be free for even an hour. How is that different from being imprisoned and shackled?

"In high antiquity people knew life is a temporary visit, and they knew death is a temporary journey; so they acted as they wished, not avoiding natural inclinations. They didn't reject personal pleasures, so they weren't motivated by reputation. Going along naturally, they did not oppose the predilections of myriad beings, and they did not grasp for fame after death, so they weren't affected by punishments. They did not calculate precedence of name and fame, or length or brevity of life."

Yang Zhu said, “Myriad beings differ in life but are the same in death. In life there are the wise and the foolish, the noble and the base; they differ in these. In death there are stench and rotting, decomposition and disintegration—they are the same in these.

“However, wisdom and folly, nobility and baseness, are not under our control; stench and rotting, decomposition and disintegration are not under our control either. So life is not something we produce, death is not something we make fatal, wisdom is not something we make wise, folly is not something we make foolish, nobility is not something we make noble, baseness is not something we make base.

“Thus myriad beings equally live and equally die, are equally wise and equally foolish, equally noble and equally base. Some die in ten years, some die in a hundred years. The humane and sagacious also die, and the cruel and ignorant also die. In life they may be [sage kings like] Yao or Shun, but in death they are rotting bones; in life they may be [corrupt kings like] Jie or Zhou, but in death they are rotting bones. The rotten bones are the same—who can tell they were different? So go for the present life—where is the leisure to consider what happens after death?”

4

Yang Zhu said, “Bo Yi was not without desire, he was extreme in purism, which left him to starve to death. Liu Xiahui was not without emotion, he was extreme in chastity, which left him with few descendants. Such are the mistaken virtues of purism and chastity.”

Yang Zhu said, “Yuan Xian was impoverished in Lu, while Zigeng grew rich in Wei. Yuan Xian’s poverty shortened his life, while Zigeng’s wealth compromised his health.”

“Then neither poverty nor wealth is good. So wherein lies the good?”

“Good is in enjoying life, good is in avoiding stress. So those who are good at enjoying life don’t go broke, while those who are good at avoiding stress don’t get rich.”

5

Yang Zhu said, “There is an ancient saying, *Compassion in life, abandonment in death.* This saying is perfect. The way of compassion is not merely emotion; those who toil can be put at ease, the starving can be fed, those suffering from the cold can be kept warm, those in straits can be fulfilled.

“The way of abandonment does not mean not mourning; it means not interring the dead with jewelry, not dressing in ornate brocade, not providing sacrificial animals, not setting out funerary implements.

“Yan Pingzhong asked Guan Yiwu about keeping healthy. Guan Yiwu said, ‘Just do as you like, without inhibition or restraint.’

“Yan Pingzhong asked, ‘What are the particulars?’ Guan Yiwu said, ‘Go ahead and listen to what your ears want to hear, look at what your eyes want to see, smell what your nose wants to smell, say what you want to say, make your body comfortable, and do as you will.

“‘Now then, what the ears want to hear is music; if they can’t get to listen to it, that is called inhibiting hearing. What the eyes want to see is beauty; if they can’t get to see it, that is called inhibiting vision. What the nose wants to smell is fragrance; if it can’t get to smell it, that is called inhibiting the sense of smell. What the mouth wants to express is judgment; if it can’t, that is called inhibiting the intellect. What the body wants for comfort is good food and clothing; if it can’t get them, that is called inhibiting ease. What the will wants to do is be free; if it cannot, that is called inhibiting nature.

“‘These inhibitions are causes of destruction. Getting rid of causes of destruction and happily awaiting death is what I call keeping healthy, even if for a day, a month, a year, or a decade. Mired in these causes of

destruction, bound up in them without relief, even if you live a long time sorrowfully, be it a century, a millennium, even ten thousand years, that's not what I would call keeping healthy.'

"Guan Yiwu said, 'Now I've told you about keeping healthy; what about sending off the dead?'

"Yan Pingzhong said, 'Sending off the dead is simple—what is there to tell?'

"Guan Yiwu said, 'I'd sure like to hear about it.'

"Pingzhong said, 'Once a body's dead, how could it retain a self? You may burn it, or sink it, or bury it. You can cover it with brushwood and leave it in a ditch, or you can dress it in formal wear and inter it in a crypt. It's all a matter of circumstance.'

"Guan Yiwu turned to Bao Shu and Huangzi and said, 'We two have presented the paths of life and death.'"

6

When Zichan was prime minister of Zheng, he administered the state single-handedly. In three years the good submitted to his influence while the bad feared his prohibitions. The state of Zheng was thus orderly, and other feudal lords dreaded it.

Zichan had an elder brother named Gongsun Chao, and a younger brother named Gongsun Mu. Chao was fond of wine, while Mu was fond of women. Chao had a thousand bottles of wine in his house, and a mountain of yeast; one could smell the lees a hundred paces away. When he was drunk, he didn't know the state of the world, the regrets of human reason, the existence of his house, the affinities of his relatives, or the joy and sorrow of life and death. Even if there were flood and fire and armed combat going on right in front of him he wouldn't know it.

As for Mu, in his back yard were several dozen rooms in a row, all filled with pretty girls of his choosing. When he was indulging in sex, he'd shut out his family and friends, cut off social relations, and escape to his back yard, where he'd spend night and day, unsatisfied if he had to emerge even once in three months. If there were pretty virgins in the neighborhood, he'd always try to bribe them to come, or seek them through go-betweens, not giving up till he got them.

Zichan worried about his brothers day and night. He went privately to Deng Xi to come up with a plan, saying, "I have heard that one governs oneself to influence the family, and governs the family to influence the state. This saying goes from the near to the remote. I have made the state orderly, but my family is disorderly—is this backwards? How can I help my brothers? Please tell me!"

Deng Xi said, “I’ve been wondering for a long time but didn’t dare be the first to speak. Why don’t you discipline them in a timely fashion, teach them the importance of nature and life, and induce them to respect courtesy and duty.”

Zichan took Deng Xi’s advice and visited his brothers in his free time, telling them, “What makes humans superior to animals is reason, and what reason calls for is courtesy and duty. When courtesy and duty are fulfilled, then honor and status arrive. If you are stirred by what touches your feelings and become addicted to indulging desires, then nation and life are in peril. If you take my advice, you’ll repent in the morning and then be drawing salaries the same night.”

Chao and Mu said, “We’ve known this for a long time, and made our choice long ago. Do you suppose we need you to tell us? Life is hard to come by, while death occurs easily. Who would think of waiting for death that occurs easily with a life that was hard to come by? You want to revere manners and duty to impress people, and overcome feelings and nature to acquire a reputation. We’d prefer death to that! We want to enjoy life to the full, so we only worry about being too full to eat or being too tired for sex; we have no time to worry about getting a bad reputation or the precariousness of nature and life.

“Now because your administration of the state can impress people, you want to disturb our minds with rhetoric and excite our ambitions with prosperity and pay. Is that not pitifully ignoble?

“We’d like to analyze this for you. Those who skillfully govern the external do not necessarily succeed in governing others, but they personally suffer along with them. Those who skillfully govern the internal do not necessarily let others run wild, but are naturally at ease with them. The way you govern the external, your laws may be effective for a while in one state, but they still don’t suit people’s minds; the way we govern the internal could be extended through the world, and government would cease. We’ve always wanted to teach you this art; now instead you would teach us the other method.”

Zichan was at a loss for a reply. The next day he related this to Deng Xi. Deng Xi said, “You’ve been living with real people without even knowing it! Who says you’re wise? The peace reigning in the state of Zheng is a coincidence; it is not your achievement!”

7

Duanmu Shu of Wei was a descendant of Zigeng. He lived off the wealth of his ancestors and had a huge hoard of gold at home. Because he didn’t have to work for a living, he did as he pleased. He did everything

people want to do, enjoyed everything people wish to enjoy. His estate, with its pavilions and gazebos, gardens and ponds, his diet, transportation, and apparel, his singers, musicians, and concubines, were comparable to those of the lords of Qi and Chu. When it came to what his senses wished to enjoy, what his ears wanted to listen to, what his eyes wanted to look at, what his palate wanted to taste, he would have it delivered, even if it were from abroad and not a native product, just as if it were a local item. When he went traveling, he'd go anywhere, even over difficult terrain of mountains and rivers, however far the distance, just as someone else might take a short walk. The guests at his house would number in the hundreds on any given day; the fires in his kitchen were always going, song and music never ceased in his parlor. What was left after providing for them, he first distributed among his clan; what the clan had left over he'd then distribute in the town and local villages; and what the town and local villages had left over he'd distribute throughout the state.

When he reached the age of sixty and his vigor was on the decline, he forsook his household affairs and gave away all his chattels, his valuables, vehicles and wardrobe, and his maids. Everything was gone in a year, with nothing left for his heirs. When he fell ill, he had no savings for medicine; then when he died, there was no money to bury him. People

throughout the state who had been beneficiaries of his generosity got together and raised funds to bury him, and restored his heirs' property.

When Qin Guli heard of this, he said, "Duanwu Shu was a madman; he disgraced his ancestry." When Duangan Sheng heard this, he said, "Duanmu Shu was an accomplished man; his virtue surpasses his ancestry. His conduct and his deeds were startling to the common mind, but acceptable to true reason. Most of the gentlemen of Wei pride themselves on ritualistic doctrine, which is certainly not sufficient for understanding this man's mind."

8

Meng Sunyang asked Yang Zhu, "Suppose someone values life and takes care of his body; can he hope to avoid death that way?"

"In principle, there is no one who does not die."

"Can one hope for long life?"

"In principle no one lives forever. Life cannot be preserved by valuing it, the body cannot be enhanced by caring for it. And what's the point of prolonging life anyway? The likes and dislikes of the five senses are the same past and present; physical safety and danger are the same past and present; the pains and pleasures of worldly affairs are the same past and present; change, order, and disorder are the same past and present. You've

already heard this, you've already seen this, you've already been through this—even a hundred years is too long, to say nothing of the misery of perpetual life!"

Meng Sunyang said, "If so, then an early death is better than long life; so you'd get your wish by treading on spears and swords, plunging into boiling water and fire."

Master Yang said, "That is not so. Since you're alive, let go and let it be; fulfill your desires until you die. When you're going to die, let go and let it be; go with it all the way, to release in extinction. Letting go of everything, letting it all be, in the meantime why be anxious about what happens sooner or later?"

9

Yang Zhu said, "Bocheng Zigao would not help anyone even if it only took a hair; he abandoned his state and retired to farm in obscurity. The great Yu wouldn't use his whole body for his own benefit; he became palsied on one side. People of old wouldn't give away a single hair to benefit the world, and wouldn't take the whole world even if it was offered; if no one sacrificed a single hair, and no one tried to profit the world, the world would be at peace."

Mr. Qiu asked Yang Zhu, “If you could save the world by sacrificing a single hair of your body, would you do it?”

Mr. Yang said, “The world can certainly not be saved by one hair.”

Mr. Qiu said, “If it could be saved, would you do it?”

Mr. Yang did not answer.

Mr. Qiu went out and talked to Meng Sunyang. Meng Sunyang said, “You didn’t understand the master’s intention. Let me try to tell you. If you could obtain ten thousand pieces of gold at the cost of injuring your skin, would you do it?”

“I would.”

Meng Sunyang said, “If you could get a whole county by cutting off one of your limbs, would you do it?”

Mr. Qiu remained silent. There was a pause. Meng Sunyang said, “A hair is slighter than skin, skin is slighter than a limb; that much is clear. However, individual hairs mount up to skin, while the skin mounts up to a limb. Since a hair is a ten-thousandth of the whole body, how can you treat it lightly?”

Mr. Qiu said, “I can’t answer you. But if we question Lao Dan and Guan Yi with your words, then what you say is right; if we question Great Yu and Mo Di with my words, then what I say is right.”

Meng Sunyang then turned to his disciples and talked about something else.

10

Yang Zhu said, “Everyone admires Shun, Yu, the Duke of Zhou, and Confucius, while everyone detests Jie and Zhou. Yet Shun plowed fields north of the river, and made pottery at Thunder Marsh. He never got a moment’s rest, and never had rich food. He was not loved by his parents, and he was not treated by his siblings as one of the family. When he was thirty years old he got married without telling his parents. When Yao abdicated the throne to him, he was already old and his intellect was already deteriorating. His own son was incompetent, so he abdicated the throne to Yu. He had worries all his life. He was one of the most miserable people on earth.

“Yu’s father worked on flood control, but his project was not completed, and he was executed at Feather Mountain. Yu took up the project after him, in the employ of his enemy, thoroughly absorbed in the earthworks. When his children were born, he didn’t even name them; when he passed by his house, he didn’t even go in. His body became palsied on one side, and his hands and feet were calloused. When Shun abdicated the

throne to him, he kept his residence humble but beautified his ritual hat. He had worries all his life; he was one of the most troubled people in the world.

"When King Wu died, King Cheng was still young, so the Duke of Zhou took charge of administration of the land. The Duke of Shao was dissatisfied, and sowed criticism throughout the states. The Duke of Zhou lived in the east for three years; he executed his older brother and exiled his younger brother, barely surviving himself. He had worries all his life; he was one of the most imperiled and threatened people in the world.

"Confucius explained the path of emperors and kings, and responded to the invitations of lords of his time. Yet a tree was felled in an attempt to crush him in Song, he had to disappear from Wei, he was arrested in Shangzhou and surrounded between Chen and Cai, he was constrained by the Li clan, and insulted by Yang Hu. He had worries all his life; he was one of the most harried people on earth.

"In sum, those four sages never had a day's enjoyment all their lives, but after they died they've been famous for myriad generations. So reputation is not obtained by reality. Even if you praised them they wouldn't know, and even if you rewarded them they wouldn't know, no different from tree stumps.

"Jie lived on wealth accumulated over generations and occupied the throne with cunning capable of keeping off subordinates and threat enough

to make the land tremble. He indulged in pleasures of the senses and did whatever he willed. Merry all his life, he was one of the most indulgent men on earth.

"Zhou also lived on wealth accumulated over generations and occupied the throne. His authority was exerted everywhere, none did not follow his will. He indulged his passions in an enormous palace, giving free rein to his lusts all night long, not troubling himself with courtesy and justice. He lived merrily until his execution; he was one of the greatest libertines in the world.

"These two villains had the pleasure of indulging their desires while alive, but after death they were saddled with reputations for ignorance and brutality. So the reality is not given by the reputation. Even if you criticized them they wouldn't know; even if you censured them they wouldn't know; how are they any different from tree stumps?

"Though the four sages are objects of admiration, they suffered to the end, and all finally died, just the same. While the two villains are objects of contempt, they had fun to the end, and they finally died too, just the same."

Yang Zhu saw the King of Liang and talked about governing the land like operating it in the palm of his hand. The King of Liang said, “You have one wife and one concubine, and still you can’t keep order; you’ve barely half an acre of garden and still you can’t keep it weeded. So how can you speak of governing the land like operating it in the palm of one’s hand!”

Yang Zhu said, “Have you ever seen a shepherd? Let a boy follow a flock of a hundred sheep with a cane; when he wants to go east they go east, when he wants to go west they go west. Now suppose Yao was leading a single sheep, with Shun following up carrying a cane—they wouldn’t be able to move forward.

“Furthermore, I have heard that a fish that could swallow a boat does not swim in a rivulet; wild swans fly on high and do not gather on mud puddles. Why? Because their aim is in the distance. Classical music cannot follow complicated dance, because its melody is too slow. This is what is meant by the saying that one who is going to govern the great does not govern the small, and one who accomplishes great works does not do little things.”

Yang Zhu said, “The events of high antiquity have passed away—who remembers them? The affairs of the Three August Ones are as much lost as extant, the affairs of the Five Emperors are as much dream as memory, the affairs of the Three Kings are as obscure as they are evident; not one of a million is known. The affairs of a lifetime may sometimes be seen or heard, but not one of ten thousand is known.

“There is no telling how many years have passed from high antiquity to the present day, but in the three hundred thousand years since Fu Xi, wisdom and folly, good and bad, success and failure, right and wrong, have all passed away, sooner or later. To be so concerned with the blame and praise of one time as to torment mind and body, this in the interest of a reputation centuries after your death, can hardly benefit dry bones. What fun is life then?”

13

Yang Zhu said, “Humans resemble the pairing of sky and earth, and have the nature of the five constants in their hearts; they are the most conscious of living creatures.

“Humans’ nails and teeth are not sufficient to provide protection and defense, their skin does not provide adequate resistance by itself, their mobility does not sufficiently enable them to pursue advantage and escape

harm. They have no fur or feathers to fend off cold and heart, and they need to rely on material things for their subsistence. They rely on intelligence rather than strength.

"For what is valuable about intelligence is its value in preserving ourselves; what is mean about strength is the meanness of interfering with things. Nevertheless, this body is not our possession. So long as we're alive, we cannot but complete it. Things are not our own possessions either, but since they exist we can't get away from them. The body is certainly the basis of life, and things are the basis of subsistence, but though we complete ourselves we cannot possess our bodies, and though we cannot do without things we cannot possess those things.

"To be possessive about your body, to be possessive about your things, is to arbitrarily be selfish about a body that belongs to the world, to arbitrarily privatize things that belong to the world. Yet it seems only sages can refrain from arbitrarily privatizing bodies belonging to the world and things belonging to the world. Only perfect people can be impartial toward bodies belonging to the world and things belonging to the world. This is what is called reaching the ultimate."

Yang Zhu said, “The reasons people cannot rest are four: striving for longevity, striving for fame, striving for status, and striving for money. With these four concerns, they fear ghosts, fear people, fear authority, and fear punishment. They are called unnatural people. They can be killed, or they can be granted life, because control of their fate is external.

“If you don’t defy destiny, why wish for long life? If you don’t care about respect, why wish for fame? If you don’t want power, why wish for status? If you don’t crave wealth, why wish for money? Those like this are called natural people; they have no adversaries in the world, as control of their destiny is within.

“So there is a saying that if people didn’t marry or serve in office, their sensual desires would be half gone; if people didn’t eat or wear clothes, government would cease. A proverb of Zhou says that a farmer can be killed by inactivity. Going out early in the morning and coming in late at night, be considers it natural and normal; eating beans and greens, he thinks they’re the finest dining. His skin and flesh are rough and thick, his sinews and joints are tight. Now put him in soft blankets and silk curtains, feed him premium rice and meat and fragrant citrus fruits, and he would be depressed and uncomfortable, with his inner irritation producing sickness. On the other hand, if the lords of Shang and Lu had the same amount of tillage as a farmer, they’d be worn out within an hour. So what country folk

consider comfortable, what country folk consider fine, they think is unsurpassed in all the world.

"In olden times there was a farmer in the state of Song who always wore hemp clothes. He barely made it through the winters, but when spring came and he went to work he warmed himself in the sun. He had no idea there were big houses with warm rooms in the world, or quilted clothing or furs. He turned to his wife and said, 'No one knows the warmth of the sun on our backs! If we present it to our lord, we'll get a valuable reward.'

"A wealthy man of the locale said to him, 'In ancient times there was a man who liked broad beans, sesame stalk, and mugwort. He praised them to the local gentry, who then obtained them and tried them, hurting their mouths and upsetting their stomachs. They all scorned him and despised him, so that man was very regretful. You are like this.'"

15

Yang Zhu said, "A big house, fine clothing, rich food, and a beautiful woman—if one has these four, what else is there to seek? Those who have these yet still seek something else are insatiable. The insatiable are parasites of yin and yang: their loyalty is inadequate to give security to their sovereigns, it is only enough to endanger themselves; their justice is inadequate to benefit people, it is only enough to injure life.

“If security is given to rulers without loyalty, the name of loyalty disappears. If people are profited without justice, the name of justice disappears. When sovereign and subjects are all secure, and others and self are both benefited, this is the ancient Way.

“Master Yu said, ‘Those who are detached from reputation have no worries.’ Master Lao said, ‘Reputation is a guest of reality.’ Yet lots of people seek reputations ceaselessly; so is it actually impossible to detach from reputation, is reputation not to be considered a guest? Nowadays you are respected and prosperous if you have a reputation, lowly and despised if you have no reputation. When you’re respected and prosperous you’re comfortable and happy; when you’re lowly and despised, you’re troubled and miserable. Trouble and misery offend nature, whereas comfort and happiness suit nature. These are what reality depends on, so how can you detach from reputation or consider reputation adventitious? Only bad men guard reputation to the detriment of reality. If you guard reputation to the detriment of reality, you will worry about being unable to avoid danger and destruction. Do you think that lies somewhere within the range of mere ease or misery?”

VIII. The Tally of the Teaching

1

Master Lie studied with Lin, Master of Pot Hill. Lin said, “If you know how to hold back, we can talk about self-preservation.”

Lie said, “Let’s hear about holding back.”

Lin said, “Look at your shadow and you’ll know it.”

Lie looked at this shadow and watched it. When he bent over, his shadow bent; and when he straightened up, his shadow was straight. So crookedness and straightness go along with the body, and are not in the shadow; constriction and expansion are up to others and not in oneself. This is called being in the forefront by holding back.

2

The Keeper of the Pass said to Master Lie, “When a sound is beautiful, the echo is beautiful; when a sound is ugly, the echo is ugly. When the body is tall, the shadow is tall; when the body is short, the shadow is short. Reputation is an echo, stature is a shadow. Therefore it is said, ‘Be careful of your speech, and there will be those who agree with you; be careful of your behavior, and there will be those who accord with you.’ This is why sages observe exits to know entries, observe goings to know comings; this is the principle enabling their foreknowledge.

“Measure is up to oneself, evaluation is up to others. If others love us, we will love them; if others despise us, we will despise them. Tang and Wu loved everyone, so they reigned as kings; Jie and Zhou despised everyone, so they perished. This is how they were evaluated. If evaluation and measure are both clear and yet you do not follow, that is like not using the door to exit, not following the road to travel. If you try to seek to benefit this way, won’t it be hard? I’ve examined the virtues of Shennong and You Yan, evaluated the books of Yu, Xia, Shang, and Zhou, and weighed the words of the doctors of law and the savants; the reasons for their rise and fall were invariably related to this Way.”

3

Yan Hui said, “The purpose of inquiring after the Way is for prosperity. Now if I acquire pearls, that’s prosperity too—why do I need the Way?”

Master Lie said, “Jie and Zhou perished because they only valued profit and disregarded the Way. This is a good opportunity, as I haven’t told you this yet. People with no sense of duty only consume, that’s all—they are chickens and dogs. Those who consume by force and contend arrogantly, with the victors exerting control, are raptors and beasts. And yet

they want people to honor them—that's impossible. If people do not respect you, danger and disgrace will come upon you."

4

Master Lie practiced archery until he could hit the bull's-eye. He told the Keeper of the Pass. The Keeper said, "Do you know how it is you hit the mark?"

He answered, "I don't know."

The Keeper of the Pass said, "That won't do."

So Lie withdrew to practice. After three years he again reported to the Keeper of the Pass. The Keeper of the Pass said, "Do you know how it is that you hit the mark?"

"Now I know," he replied.

"That will do," said the Keeper of the Pass. "Keep it and don't lose it. Not only archery, but everything you do for the nation and yourself is also like this. Therefore sages do not examine survival and destruction, they examine the reasons for them."

5

Master Lie said, "The robust are haughty, the strong are assertive. You can't talk to them about the Way. If you talk of the Way to people

whose hair is not yet graying, they don't get it, much less put it into practice. So if you assert yourself, no one will advise you, and if no one advises you, you'll be alone, without assistance.

"The wise delegate responsibilities to others, so they don't degenerate even in old age, and they're not confused even when at the end of their wits. So the difficulty of governing a country is in recognizing the wise, not in considering oneself wise."

6

A man of Song once replicated a mulberry leaf in jade for his lord. It took three years to complete. The sharpness and thinness, the stem and stalk, the fuzz and the luster, were such that if it were mixed with real mulberry leaves it could not be distinguished. As a result, this man was patronized by the state of Song for his skill.

When Master Lie heard of this, he said, "If it took the sky and earth three years to make a single leaf, there wouldn't be much foliage! So sages rely on natural evolution, not cunning artifice."

7

Master Lie was impoverished, and had the look of hunger on his face. A visitor told of this to [the prime minister of] Zheng, Ziyang, saying,

“Lie Yukou is a man who has mastered the Way. If he has fallen into poverty living in your state, doesn’t that mean you consider him unworthy?”

So Zheng’s Ziyang had an officer send Lie some grain. When Master Lie came out and saw the emissary, he bowed twice and refused. The emissary left.

Master Lie went back inside. His wife looked at him and said indignantly, “I’ve heard that the wives and children of masters of the Way all have it easy. Now we’re starving, yet when the lord sends you food you refuse it. Surely this isn’t fate, is it?”

Master Lie laughed and told her, “The lord doesn’t know me personally. If he sent me grain because of what someone else said, then he could also condemn me because of what someone else said. Therefore I don’t accept.”

As it turned out, people actually opposed Ziyang and assassinated him.

8

Mr. Shi of Lu had two sons, one of whom was fond of study, the other fond of arms. The studious one offered his arts to the lord of Qi. The lord of Qi hired him to tutor his princes. The militarist went to Chu and

offered his science to the lord of Chu. The lord of Chu was pleased with him, and made him a military director. Their salaries enriched their family, their ranks brought glory for their parents.

Mr. Shi's neighbor Mr. Meng also had two sons, who also pursued the same professions, but were impoverished. Envying what the Shi's had, they inquired how to get ahead. The two sons of Mr. Shi told them the facts.

One of Mr. Meng's son's went to Qin to put his arts at the service of the king of Qin. The king of Qin said, "At present the lords are fighting each other, so their only concerns are armaments and food. If I used humaneness and justice to rule my state, this would be a way to destruction." So he had him castrated and banished.

The other son went to Wei, where he sought to put his science at the service of the lord of Wei. The lord of Wei said, "Mine is a weak state, and it is hemmed in between large states. I render service to larger states, while aiding smaller states—this is the way to security. If I rely on military strategy, I can expect to be annihilated. Now if I send you back in one piece, you may go to another state and cause me some serious trouble." So he had his feet cut off and sent him back to Lu.

Once they were back, Mr. Meng's sons went with him to Mr. Shi, beating their breasts and complaining. Mr. Shi said, "Those whose timing

is right flourish, while those whose timing is off perish. Your pursuits are the same as ours, but your results were different from ours. This was because your timing was off, not because your practices were mistaken.

"No principle in the world is always right, and no thing is always wrong. What was used yesterday may be rejected today, what is rejected now may be used later on. This use or disuse has no fixed right or wrong. To avail yourself of opportunities at just the right time, responding to events without being set in your ways, is in the domain of wisdom. If your wisdom is insufficient, even if you are as learned as Confucius and as skilled as Lu Shang, you'll come to an impasse wherever you go."

Mr. Meng and his sons, losing their angry looks, said, "We get it—say no more!"

9

Duke Wen of Jin rallied the feudal lords to attack Wei. Gongzi Chu looked up at the sky and laughed. The Duke asked him why he laughed. He said, "I'm laughing at how a neighbor was accompanying his wife to his in-laws' house when he saw a woman tending mulberries on the way. He was pleased and spoke to her. But then when he looked back at his wife, someone else was flirting with her too! I'm laughing to myself over this."

The Duke understood what he was saying and gave up, withdrawing his army to return. Before they got back, there were attackers on his own northern border.

10

The state of Jin was plagued by thievery. There was someone named Xi Yong who could read thieves' faces, apprehending their reality by examining the space between their eyebrows and eyelashes. The lord of Jin had him look for thieves, and he never missed even one in a hundred or a thousand. Delighted, the Duke of Jin told Zhao Wenzi, "I've found one man through whom all the thievery in the state is being eliminated. What's the need of many?"

Wenzi said, "My lord, you're relying on surveillance to catch thieves. But thievery is not ended, and Xi Yong will surely not die a natural death."

Before long a bunch of thieves plotted to kill Xi Yong as the one thwarting them. And they did in fact gang up to murder him.

When the Duke of Jin heard of this he was shocked. He called Wenzi and told him, "It turned out just as you said—Xi Yong is dead! So how should I catch thieves?"

Wenzi said, “A proverb of Zhou says that one perceptive enough to sight fish in a deep pond is unlucky, and one clever enough to figure out secrets is doomed. Now if you want to eliminate thievery, nothing compares to promotion and appointment of the virtuous. Let education be clear above, so its influence is effective below, and the people will have a sense of shame. Then what thievery would there be?”

So he employed Sui Hui to manage the government, and all the thieves fled to Qin.

11

As Confucius was returning from Wei to Lu, he stopped his vehicle on a bridge over a river and gazed into it. There was a waterfall two hundred and fifty feet high, and a whirlpool of thirty miles. Fish and turtles couldn’t swim it, sea-turtles and crocodiles couldn’t live in it. There was a man who was going to ford it; Confucius sent someone along the shore to stop him, saying, “This waterfall is two hundred and fifty feet high, and the whirlpool is thirty miles. Don’t you think it will be hard to cross?”

But the man paid no attention. He actually crossed and came out on the other side. Confucius asked him, “Is this skill? Do you have Taoist art? How were you able to go in and get out?”

The man said, “First I go in with dedication and trust; then I also get out by dedication and trust. Dedication and trust put my body on the current, and I don’t presume to act on my own, so in this way I am able to go in and also get out.”

Confucius said to his disciples, “Make a note of this, lads! Even water can be befriended by dedication, faith, and personal sincerity—how much more so people!”

12

The Duke of Bai asked Confucius, “Can one speak discreetly to another?”

Confucius did not reply.

The Duke of Bai asked, “What if one tossed a stone in water?”

Confucius said, “A good swimmer could retrieve it.”

“What if water is poured into water?”

Confucius said, “Where rivers join, someone with a sensitive palate could still distinguish their water by taste.”

The Duke of Bai said, “So it’s impossible to speak discreetly to another?”

Confucius said, “How is it impossible? But only one who knows what words mean can do so. One who knows what words mean does not

speak with words. Those who are after fish get wet, those in pursuit of beasts run, but not because they like to. Therefore the supreme speech is unspoken, the supreme act is uncontrived. What shallow knowledge contends over is trivia."

The Duke of Bai didn't get it, and wound up dead in his bath house.

13

Zhao Xiangzi had Xinzhi Muzi attack the Di people. He overcame them and took two cities. He sent a messenger back to report this. Xiangzi, who was just then dining, looked worried. Those around him said, "Two cities conquered in one day is something people would celebrate, but now you look worried—why?"

Xiangzi said, "A flood tide lasts no more than three days, a storm doesn't last all day, high noon doesn't last a moment. Now the Zhao clan has no history of benevolent conduct, so if two cities fall to us in one day, destruction may overcome us too!"

When Confucius heard of this he said, "The Zhao clan will flourish!" That is, anxiety is a means of creating success, while celebration is a means of bringing about destruction. Victory is not the difficult thing—what is hard is to keep it. This is the way a wise ruler maintains supremacy, so that fortune extends to future generations. Qi, Chu, Wu, and Yue all

were victorious at some point, but eventually got destroyed; they never succeeded in maintaining supremacy.

Only rulers who have the Way can maintain supremacy. Confucius was strong enough to lift the bolt on a state border gate, yet he was unwilling to be famed for strength. Mozi contrived defenses and offenses that outdid [the archetypical engineer] Gongshu Ban, but he was unwilling to be famed for military science. So those who are good at maintaining superiority consider strength to be weakness.

14

In Song there were people who had avidly practiced humanity and justice for three generations. For no reason a black cow belonging to the family gave birth to a white calf, and they asked Confucius about it. Confucius said, “This is an auspicious omen. Offer it to God.”

In a year, the father of the house had gone blind for no reason, and that cow had produced another white calf. The father had his son query Confucius again. His son said, “You asked about this before and lost your eyesight; why ask again?”

The father said, “The words of sages are illogical at first but later make sense. The matter is not yet resolved, so ask him again.”

His son then questioned Confucius again. Confucius said, “It’s an auspicious omen,” and again advised him to sacrifice it. The son went home and conveyed these directions. In a year, the son too had gone blind for no reason.

Subsequently Chu attacked Song and besieged the capital city. The inhabitants sold their children to eat, split bones of corpses and cooked them. All the able-bodied climbed the walls to fight, and more than half of them died. This father and son, however, having a disability, were both exempted. Then when the siege was lifted, they both recovered from their affliction.

15

There was an itinerant from Song who sought employment with Song Yuan as an entertainer. Song Yuan invited him and had him show his skills. Fixing stilts to his legs twice again as tall as he, he gamboled about on them, juggling seven swords all the while, keeping five of the swords in the air at all times.

Lord Yuan was amazed, and immediately rewarded him with gold and silk.

Another itinerant who could do acrobatics too heard about this and also went to offer to perform for Lord Yuan. Enraged, Lord Yuan said,

“There was someone with unusual skills who performed for me before. His skills were useless, but it so happened I was entertained, and therefore I gave him gold and silk. Now this fellow must have heard about this and come forward hoping to get a reward from me too.” He had him arrested and was going to have him executed, but then let him go after a month.

16

Duke Mu of Qin said to [his horse expert] Bolo, “You’re getting old —is there anyone in your family who can be sent to look for horses?”

Bolo replied, “You can tell a good horse by its appearance and physique, but a world-class horse seems to vanish, to disappear—one like this stirs no dust and leaves no tracks. My children are all of lesser ability —they can tell a good horse, but they can’t tell a world-class horse.

“There’s someone I’ve hauled loads and collected firewood with, a certain Jiufeng Gao, who is in no way inferior to me when it comes to horses. Please see him.”

Duke Mu met him and sent him on a mission to search for a horse. He came back after three months and reported, “I’ve found one. It’s at Sand Hill.”

Duke Mu asked, “What kind of horse is it?”

“A tawny mare,” he replied.

When people were sent to fetch it, the horse turned out to be a black stallion. Duke Mu was displeased. He summoned Bolo and said, “What a failure, this fellow you had me send searching for a horse! He can’t even tell what color it is, or what gender—how can he be knowledgeable about horses?”

Bolo sighed and said, “So it has come to this? This is why he is countless millions of times better than I. What Gao observes is natural potential—he gets the fine and forgets the coarse; he focuses on the inside and forgets the outside. He sees what he has to see, and doesn’t see what he doesn’t have to see. He looks at what he has to look at, and ignores what he doesn’t have to look at. The way Gao judges horses has something more important than horses.”

When the horse arrived, it did turn out to be a world-class horse.

17

King Zhuang of Chu asked Zhan He, “How is a state to be governed?”

Zhan He said, “I understand how to govern oneself, but I don’t understand how to govern a state.”

The King said, “I am in charge of the ancestral temple and the earth and grain shrines, and wish to learn how to preserve them.”

Zhan He said, “I’ve never heard of anyone who was personally orderly but whose state was in chaos. And I’ve never heard of anyone who was personally disorderly yet whose state was orderly. So the root is in the individual; I dare not reply about the branches.”

The King of Chu said, “Good.”

18

The Elder of Fox Hill said to Sunshu Ao, “People have three resentments—do you know them?”

Sunshu Ao said, “What do you mean?”

He replied, “Those of high status, people envy. Those in powerful offices, rulers dislike. Those with rich salaries, resentment overtakes.”

Sunshu Ao said, “The higher my rank, the humbler my aspirations; the more powerful my office, the more careful my attention; the richer my salary, the more extensive my charities—can I escape the three resentments this way?”

19

When Sunshu Ao fell ill and was about to die, he admonished his son, “The king repeatedly tried to enfeoff me, but I wouldn’t accept. When I die, the king will enfeoff you. Don’t accept land with rich soil! There is a

place between Chu and Yue called Dwarf Hill; its soil is not as good and its reputation is bad. The people of Chu believe in ghosts, while the people of Yue believe in curses. This is the only place you can keep forever."

When Sunshu Ao died, the king did in fact enfeoff his son with fine land. His son refused and asked for Dwarf Hill. This was granted, and since then it has never been lost.

20

Niu Que was a great scholar from Shangdi. Traveling to Handan, he was beset by robbers at Odd Sands River. They took all his clothes, his luggage, and his carriage, so Niu went his way on foot. Seeing him so nonchalant, the robbers went after him and asked him the reason. He said, "A noble man does not let material needs harm what they support." The robbers exclaimed what a wise man he was, but then they said among themselves, "With wisdom like that, if he meets the lord of Zhao, he'll get him to do something about us. That surely means trouble for us. We'd better kill him." So they chased him down and murdered him.

A man of Yan heard of this and gathered his family to warn them, "If you run into robbers, don't be like Niu Que of Shangdi!" Everyone took a lesson.

Before long the man's younger brother set off on a trip to Qin. As it turned out, he encountered robbers along the way. Remembering his older brother's warning, he resisted the robbers stoutly. He was no match for them, but yet he followed them meekly asking for his things. The robbers said angrily, "We were generous just to let you go, and yet you keep following us! You're going to leave an obvious trail! Since we're robbers, why would we be humane?" So they killed him, and murdered four or five of his companions as well.

21

Mr. Yu was a wealthy man of Liang. His family business was flourishing, and he had cash and silk beyond measure, money and goods beyond reckoning. He had a party in an upper room overlooking the main road, with music, wine, and gambling. Just as some mercenaries were passing below, a gambler upstairs won twice in a row and laughed. At that moment a kite in flight dropped its prey, a dead rat, and it landed on the mercenaries. They said among themselves, "Mr. Yu has enjoyed prosperity for a long time now, and he always has an attitude of contempt for others. We have done nothing to offend him, yet here he insults us with a dead rat! If we don't respond, we'll have no way to show the world we're serious! Let's join forces, bring along our gangs, and we'll wipe out his family and

associates.” Everyone agreed. The night of the appointed date, they gathered their bands, massed their soldiers, and exterminated the whole family.

22

There was a man of the East named Yuan Wingmu. He was going somewhere when hunger overtook him on the road. A thief from Gufu named Qin saw him and gave him something to eat.

After three mouthfuls, Yuan Xingmu was able to see. He asked, “Who are you?”

“I am Qin, from Gufu.”

“Oh! Aren’t you a thief? How could you feed me? I’m duty-bound not to eat your food!” Bracing himself with both hands on the ground, he tried to vomit it up, but it wouldn’t come out, and he finally collapsed and died, gacking.

The man from Gufu was a thief, but feeding is not theft. Just because the man is a thief, to call feeding thievery and refuse to eat is to confuse name and reality.

23

Zhu Lishu worked for Duke Ao of Ju, but he quit and went to live by the sea because he thought he wasn't being recognized. In summer he fed on water chestnuts, in winter he ate tree chestnuts.

When Duke Ao of Ju had trouble, Zhu Lishu left his friends to go sacrifice his life for him. His friends said, "You left because you thought you weren't being given due recognition, yet now you're going to sacrifice your life for him. This is making no distinction between being recognized and not being recognized."

Zhu Lishu said, "Not so. I left because I thought I wasn't getting recognition. Now if I die, that means he does not in fact acknowledge me. I'm going to sacrifice my life for him to shame future rulers who don't acknowledge their ministers."

Generally speaking, to sacrifice your life for someone who acknowledges you but not for someone who doesn't is the straightforward way to go. Zhu Lishu may be said to be one who forgot himself on account of resentment.

24

Yang Zhu said, "Those who make their output beneficial are rewarded in return; harm comes to those from whom resentment proceeds.

What emerges from here and reverberates on the outside is simple sense, so savants are careful about what they put out."

25

A neighbor of Master Yang lost a sheep. Having mustered his people, he also asked Master Yang for his servants to go after it.

Master Yang said, "Hey, you've only lost one sheep—why do you need so many to go after it?"

The neighbor replied, "There are a lot of forks in the road."

When they returned, Master Yang asked his neighbor, "Did you find the sheep?"

"No, we lost it."

"How could you lose it?"

"Because the forks in the road also had forks in them—we didn't know where to go, so we came back."

A look of distress came over Master Yang's face. He didn't speak for some time, and didn't smile the rest of the day. His students wondered about this and asked, "A sheep is an inexpensive animal, and it didn't belong to you anyway. So why have you stopped speaking and smiling?"

Master Yang didn't answer, and his students didn't get what he intended. The disciple Meng Sunyang went off and told the Master of the

Mind Capital. Another day the Master of the Mind Capital and Meng Sunyang went to Master Yang together and posed the following question: "Once there were three brothers who traveled around Qi and Lu, studied with the same teachers, and returned thoroughly versed in the principles of humaneness and justice. Their father asked, 'What is the path of humaneness and justice?' The eldest son said, 'Humaneness and justice would have us care for our selves more than our honor.' The middle son said, 'Humaneness and justice would have us sacrifice our selves to be honorable.' The youngest one said, 'Humaneness and justice would have us be complete in both our selves and our honor.' These three policies are mutually contradictory, yet all of them come from Confucianism; who is right, who is wrong?"

Master Yang said, "There was a man who lived by a river; used to the water, he was a strong swimmer. He made his living running a ferry boat, which yielded enough profit to feed a hundred people. Many people came from afar to learn from him, but nearly half of them drowned. They had come to learn to swim, not to learn to sink, but the gain and loss turned out this way. Who do you think was right, and who was wrong?"

The Master of the Mind Capital left in silence. Meng Sunyang pressed him, saying, "Why was your question so indirect, and the master's reply so odd? My perplexity is even worse."

The Master of the Mind Capital said, “The sheep got lost on the main road because of a multitude of byways; scholars waste their lives because of a multitude of formulas. Studies may not be different or disparate at the outset, but this is how different the outcomes can be. Only returning to sameness and restoring unity can eliminate gain and loss. You’ve been in the teacher’s school and studied the teacher’s way for a long time, yet you don’t understand the teacher’s examples. What a pity!”

26

Yang Zhu’s younger brother Bu went out wearing white clothes. It rained, so he removed his white clothing and changed into black clothing. When he got home, his dog barked at him, failing to recognize him. Yang Bu got angry and was going to beat the dog, but Yang Zhu said, “Don’t beat it! You’re just the same. If your dog went out white and came back black, wouldn’t you wonder?”

27

Yang Zhu said, “Doing good is not for honor, yet honor follows it. Honor is not for profit, but profit takes to it. Profit is not for conflict, yet conflict overtakes it. Therefore a noble man must be careful about doing good.”

Once there was a man who claimed to know the way to immortality, and the lord of Yan sent an emissary to learn it. He did not succeed, and the man who'd made the claim died.

The lord of Yan was furious, and was going to have that emissary executed. A favored minister admonished him, "People worry about nothing so much as death, and one values nothing so much as life. If he lost his own life, how could he have enabled you not to die?" So the lord didn't execute the emissary.

A certain Qizi also wanted to learn the method; when he heard that the man claiming it had died, he beat his breast in bitter lament. Hearing of this, Fuzi laughed and said, "What you want to study is immortality, yet you're still bitter now that the man has died. You don't know how to learn."

Huzi said, "Fuzi's statement is wrong. There are those who know arts they cannot practice, and there are also those who can practice but have no art. There was a man of Wei who was good at calculation and taught his secret to his son on his deathbed. His son memorized his instructions but couldn't carry them out. Someone else asked him, and he told him what his father had said. The inquirer made use of those instructions and practiced

that art, no different from the other man's father. So why couldn't someone who died tell of the art of living?"

29

The people of Handan presented pigeons to Jianzi on New Year's Day. Jianzi was delighted and rewarded them richly. A guest asked him why. Jianzi said, "Releasing living creatures on New Year's Day demonstrates benevolence."

The guest said, "The people know you want to release them, so they vie to catch them, and a lot of them die. If you want to let them live, it would be better to prohibit the people from trapping them. If they're caught to be released, the benevolence does not compensate for the transgression."

Jianzi said, "You're right."

30

Mr. Tian of Qi was performing a ceremony in his courtyard, entertaining a thousand guests. In the course of the proceedings there were those who offered up fish and geese. Observing this, Mr. Tian sighed and said, "How generous Nature is to the people growing the five grains and producing fish and fowl for their use!" The whole crowd of guests echoed their agreement.

A twelve-year-old lad of the Bao family who was attending came forward and said, “It is not as you say. Heaven and earth, myriad beings and ourselves, are born together, of a kind. There are not higher or lower species, it’s just that they dominate and devour each other depending on the differences in magnitude of intelligence and strength. It is not that they are born for each other’s purposes. If people take what they can eat and consume it, does that mean Nature originally produced it for humans? If so, mosquitoes bite skin, tigers and wolves eat flesh—wouldn’t that mean Nature created humans for mosquitoes and created flesh for wolves and tigers?”

31

There was a pauper of Qi who used to beg in the city market. At the city market they were bothered by his frequency, and no one would give him anything. Finally he went to the stables of the Tian clan and did chores for the horse doctor to get something to eat. Townspeople teased him, saying, “Isn’t it embarrassing to live off a horse doctor?”

The beggar said, “There’s nothing in the world more embarrassing than begging. If I’m not embarrassed to beg, why should I be embarrassed about a horse doctor?”

32

A man of Song was walking along the road when he found a tally someone had lost. He returned home and hid it away. Privately counting its notches, he told his neighbor, “I’m going to be rich!”

33

A man had a dead phoenix tree. His neighbor’s father said a dead phoenix tree is unlucky, so the neighbor was scared into cutting it down. Then the neighbor’s father asked for it, to use for firewood. The man was displeased. He said, “My neighbor’s father got me to cut it down just because he wanted firewood. He’s my neighbor, yet such a crooked deceiver—how can that be alright?”

34

A man who lost his axe suspected his neighbor’s son—“Look at the way he walks—he’s stolen the axe! The expression on his face—he’s stolen the axe! The way he talks—he’s stolen the axe!” Every act, every attitude, indicated that he’d stolen the axe.

One day the man found the axe as he was digging in the valley. The next time he saw his neighbor’s son, he wasn’t acting like he’d stolen the axe.

35

The Duke of Bai was contemplating rebellion. After court one day he stood there with his riding crop upside down; the metal tip pierced his chin, and blood flowed to the ground, yet he didn't even notice.

A man of Zheng heard of this and said, "If he'll forget his chin, what won't he forget?"

When your attention is fixated, you may stumble on a stump or a pothole, or bump your head on a tree, without even being aware of it yourself.

36

In ancient times there was a man of Qi who wanted gold. One morning he put on his coat and hat and went to town. Coming to a gold-seller's booth, he snatched the gold and left.

When the police arrested him, they asked, "With everybody there, how could you take someone's gold?"

He replied, "When I took the gold, I didn't see the people, I only saw the gold."

Notes

I. Celestial Signs

1.

Master Lie lived in the game preserve of Zheng for forty years without anyone recognizing him.

Zhang Zhan [ca. 370 C.E.] commented: It's not that he didn't interact with others, or didn't converse with others. They didn't know the extent of his virtue, so it was the same as if they didn't know him.

Jiang Yu [ca. mid-11th century C.E.] commented: Master Lie was a good man of ancient times. With mystic penetration of minute subtleties, his inner attainment was profound. Because he was unfathomable, he lived in the game preserve of Zheng for forty years without anyone recognizing him. There were a lot of savants there, so residence for forty years without being recognized shows how deeply he concealed his capabilities. This is what the *Book of Change* calls retreating into privacy.

The ruler, aristocrats, and grandees of the state looked upon him as one of the peasants.

Zhang Zhan: It's not that he secluded himself from people. This just means there was no judging him, no trace of fixation in his behavior, so no one could know him.

Jiang Yu: Those with qualities sufficient to rule a state and policies adequate to take care of the people ought to strive to seek savants. Those with sufficient intelligence to lead communities ought to be wise enough to know people. If the ruler, aristocrats, and grandees looked upon him as one of the ordinary folk, the reason for this is that he was too deep for them to know.

During a famine, he was going to remove to Wei.

Zhang Zhan: Leaving your own house is called removing.

Jiang Yu: People who study Master Lie these days mistakenly think that since he could ride the wind he didn't eat the five grains but lived on a diet of air and dew. They do not realize that once in the human world the problems of human life are inevitable for all alike. Therefore the books mentions this first to get students of later times to strive to seek the Way rather than using abnormal practices to amaze ordinary folk. The chapter *The Tally of the Teaching* also says Master Lie was emaciated, with the look of starvation on his face.

His disciples said, "If you go with no prospect of returning, how will we call with questions, and how will you teach? Haven't you heard the word of Lin, Master of Pot Hill?"

Zhang Zhang [hereafter ZZ]: Lin, Master of Pot Hill, was Master Lie's teacher.

Jiang Yu [hereafter JY]: Embodying openness and accommodation, following a course of centered balance, inclusively covering myriad beings —such was Lin, Master of Pot Hill. This is why he was Master Lie's teacher.

What does Pot-Hill have to say?

ZZ: As the four seasons proceed, a hundred things are born; what need have they of words?

Elder Darkness

ZZ: Elder Darkness was an associate of Master Lie, who also studied with Master Pot. Not saying he himself had been taught by Master Pot is Master Lie's humility.

JY: Master Lie's teacher, Master Pot, looked at him and smiled; their minds were in accord. As for the blind man Elder Darkness, he was older and intellectually brilliant; it was out of pity that Master Pot couldn't help talking to him. Master Lie got to hear it standing by. Zhuangzi said, "To know but not say is the way to go to heaven." This was how Master Lie related to Master Pot. Zhuangzi also said, "To know and say it is the way to go to people." This is why Master Pot spoke to the blind man Elder Darkness.

There is that which is born and that which is unborn; there is that which changes and that which does not change. The unborn gives birth to what is

born, the unchanging produces change. What produces birth cannot but produce, what evolves change cannot but change.

ZZ: What is born is not born by ability to produce, what changes is not changed by ability to change. This just refers to what cannot but produce and evolve.

JY: The deities in heaven, the riches of the earth, the reason sages are sages, the reason beings are beings—this is all summed up in the expression birth and production. Therefore the chapter on celestial signs first clarifies this.

Physical bodies as distinct entities never stop changing and deteriorating; this is what it means to have birth and production. True eternity unchanging, before cosmic evolution has begun, is considered unborn and unproduced.

Fenced in by having been born, then changing day by day, how is it possible to renew life? Belabored by changes, ultimately to end up in annihilation, how is it possible to keep evolving?

What is born undergoes changes; how can the unborn have any change? What changes ultimately passes away, but what does not change never originates or passes away.

Life in all its profusion is a manifestation of the true mind; this is the capacity to renew life. Change in all its complexity is produced by the

ineffable mind; this is the capacity to keep evolving.

Once there is birth, it is impossible not to be born; once there is change, it is impossible not to change. Even heaven and earth in their immensity, and the sun and moon in their brilliance are wholly contained within the boundaries of birth and change. So there may be processes they can't stop themselves, or operations they can't halt themselves; the changes in the seasons and passing of the years have never ceased since time immemorial, to say nothing of myriad things. If what produces cannot but produce, then what produces birth cannot but produce birth; if what changes cannot but change, then what evolves change cannot but evolve change too.

No one can find the beginning of the production of birth or the process of change; producing and changing without any sense of limitation is how heaven and earth contain myriad things without exhaustion, how the Way contains heaven and earth without end.

Even so, what is unborn and unchanging cannot be named; the terms mean there is manifestation but not limitation. Therefore there cannot be something unborn and unchanging outside the born and the changing; the subtlety of the unborn and unchanging is right within the born and changing. Therefore it says that there is the born and the unborn, the changing and the unchanging, in order to say that what is born is in reality never produced, and what changes has really never changed, while the

reason for birth and change is not outside and not in the self; it is just natural birth and natural change.

When you look at the first statement that there is the born and the unborn, there is the changing and the unchanging, it has already exhausted the principle, but as it is still necessary to clarify the logic of producing birth and evolving change, in the end it is imperative to resolve this into natural birth and natural change. If you harmonize with birth and change in the midst of birth and change, then you are not controlled by birth and change even though within them. So the birth of myriad things is all the real substance of our mind, while the evolution of myriad things is all the subtle function of our mind. This is what makes a sage a sage, and it is the import of Master Lie's lesson.

Therefore it is always producing, always changing.

ZZ: Whatever comes into existence can no longer be nonexistent.

What is always producing and always changing is never not producing, never not changing.

ZZ: Generation and change are interdependent; existence and nonexistence come and go. They are not separate in principle.

JY: What is being called that which is always producing and changing refers to all things throughout all times; it is the supreme principle of Creation. Observing it is one being, since it is born through a process of

change, it also dies through a process of change. The temporary massing of energy is called birth, so it can't live forever. The aging and death of the body is change, so it can't be a permanent change. That is because the relation of Creation to all beings is that while they're alive they never stop changing, and when they die the change still goes on. Since there is ongoing change, there is also unbroken regeneration. If there were the slightest discontinuity between generation and change in a single thing in Creation, then the principle of generation and change might come to an end. It's been said that beings' birth and death are like the sun's day and night—when the sun comes out it's day, when the sun sets it's night—how can the day be said to be born, or the night extinguished? This is what is meant by always producing, always changing. The Old Master's scripture on the Way speaks of the eternal Way, the eternal name, eternal nonbeing, and eternal being—if you speak of the Way without reaching the eternal, that is not sufficient to merit the name of the gateway to all wonders.

yin and yang are thus, the four seasons are thus

ZZ: Yin and yang and the four seasons are things that change, and everything in the realm of life follows this operation. The four seasons go on without stopping, myriad things evolve unceasing.

JY: The distribution of yin and yang makes the four seasons. Whatever belongs to the realm of life follows this operation, unable to be thus of

itself. But the Way dissolves into yin and yang; their production and change are only in that which has form. The subtlety of the eternally living and eternally evolving is not seen in this. The saying that yin and yang and the four seasons are thus is minimalism.

A book of the Yellow Emperor says, "*The valley spirit does not die—*

ZZ: This book existed in ancient times, but is no longer extant. A valley is empty yet lodges existence. This is also like Zhuangzi's reference to the center of a ring. As it is completely empty, nothing is there, so it is called the valley spirit.

this is called the mystic female.

ZZ: Laozi has this passage: Wang Bi notes, "Formless, shadowless, never refusing or opposing, staying humble, keeping calm without deterioration, a valley is made this way without manifesting a form. This supreme being remains humble and unnameable, so it is called the mysterious female."

The opening of the mystic female is called the root of heaven and earth. Continuous, as if it were there, its application is effortless."

ZZ: Wang Bi says, "The opening is where the mysterious female comes from; because its original source is the same as the absolute, it is called the root of heaven and earth. Do you suppose it's there? You don't see its form. Do you suppose it's not? Myriad things are born through it. That is

why it is said to be continuous, as if there. Because it creates everything without labor, it is called effortless."

JY: A valley is empty but can echo, responding without reserve. As people produce a mild energy, circulating throughout the body, in its going out and in through the nose and mouth there is the image of a valley. The valley spirit means the spirit of the valley; this is used to express attaining unity, which cannot be fathomed because of its uncanny subtlety.

The valley spirit not dying is the way to long life and eternal vision. The reason it is called undying is as follows. All living beings are commanded by Creation and compelled by yin and yang: when they're born they cannot but be born, and when they die they cannot but die. Only humans, as the most intelligent of all creatures, though having life at the command of Creation like all beings, once alive have something Creation cannot cause to die. That is to say, we share a single energy with heaven and earth, which governs; if we preserve the basic root in ourselves, thus our life is up to us, not subject to heaven and earth. If you can always preserve the valley spirit, then you breathe from your heels and mellow energy pervades your body. When the teacher of the Yellow Emperor cultivated his body for twelve centuries without physical deterioration, though he was mortal he entered into immortality; unborn, he is as eternal

as the Way. Therefore the valley spirit is not referred to as living, but as not dying.

"Mysterious" represents heaven, "female" corresponds to earth. The female is totally yin, but is the one that can reproduce life. In metaphysics, yin precedes yang, so when reference is made to this thing's regeneration it is called "female," the endless regeneration of the valley spirit is the mysterious female. That is because when the subtlety of the valley spirit is used in yourself it enlivens you, and when it is applied to others it enlivens others. If you can keep that spirit present, how could there be any end to its making life? Since its essential wonder is such, what else but the mysterious female can constitute the gate of life? Speaking in terms of exit and entry, going and coming, the valley spirit in us exits and enters, going and coming without any interruption at all; if you can keep it alive and undying, then the whole body's processes of filling and emptying are not controlled by Creation, and Creation is within us.

The reason heaven and earth can last forever is rooted in this Way, so "the opening of the mysterious female is called the root of heaven of earth; continuous, it seems to be there." This is the substance of the valley spirit; its application without effort is the Way of the valley spirit. "Continuous" is used to express being slight yet not breaking. Being gossamer, it "seems to be there," yet is neither existent nor nonexistent.

Applying it without effort is what Mencius refers to as simply nurturing without harm; the constituent energy cannot be left unused, and yet its use should not be stressed. Not to use it would be like a fool who didn't plant seedlings; to use it with strain is like the fool who uprooted his sprouts by tugging at them to hasten their growth. Only by using it effortlessly is it possible to fill the space between heaven and earth.

"'The unborn seems singular;

ZZ: How can what is unborn actually be experienced? It seems to mean indefinite oneness, with no beginning or end.

the unchanging is cyclic, with no final limit.

ZZ: Continuously in transition, matter and energy go on evolving, their course never-ending.

No end can be found to the course of the seemingly singular.

ZZ: Yet how can we know if it has any end or not? It just subjectively seems it is independent and unalterable, active everywhere without limit.

JY: Simply singular, it can therefore match and respond and be associated with all that moves. This is what all things depend on, what the totality of evolution relates to.

However, the Way does not match beings, being match themselves. What the Old Master refers to as seeming to be the source of all things is what is here referred to as seeming singular. Coming and going is what is

referred to as the beginningless cycle. Because its extent is endless and its course is inexhaustible, it is eternally alive and always evolving.

2.

"*In ancient times, sages summed up heaven and earth in terms of yin and yang. If what has form originates in no form, then where do heaven and earth come from?*

"Therefore it is said that there was a cosmic evolution, a cosmic origin, a cosmic beginning, and a cosmic elemental. In the cosmic evolution, energy is not yet manifest. The cosmic origin is the beginning of energy. The cosmic beginning is the beginning of form. The cosmic elemental is the beginning of substance.

JY: Brightness is born in the dark, the orderly is born in the formless. All things are evolved by the universe, but while the universe produces myriad things it is not separate from what has form. Since it has form, it cannot have come from nothing. If it has an origin, then do we know where it comes from? If no one knows where it came from, then to say that what has form arises from formlessness is not reliable either.

The universe is the biggest of existents, hard to reach the end, hard to fathom. It cannot be said to come from nowhere, but no one can see where it comes from. If you can find out the principle of producing

production in your own individual being, then the universe and oneself are born together. So how can it be unknowable?

Even so, the nonbeing of the cosmic beginning cannot be discussed in words. What can be spoken of is only being as yet unformed. Therefore the order is elucidated from cosmic evolution. But what are the so-called cosmic evolution, cosmic beginning, cosmic origin, and cosmic elemental? These too are based on the Great Way producing being from nonbeing; based on the order of production, names are contrived for figurative description, that's all.

Evolution has no formal boundaries; evolution undergoes change constituting a unity; the one changes into seven, seven turns into nine; nine's change is final, then it reverts to one.

In standard numerical associations, one is the production number of water, seven is the completion number of fire, nine is the end number of sky. In alchemical tradition, in which the evolutionary process is internalized, water stands for vitality, fire for spirit, sky for completion.

4.

This essay raises the question of what we know about the world around us, and whether we see cause-effect relations in stereotypes that when outmoded thwart our ability to see actual connections. The emphasis here on the unexpected and the unthinkable stimulates questioning of specifics,

while the total scheme conveys the general idea of interrelatedness of all things, their formation from elements and their dissolution into elements.

Hou Qi is alleged to have been the ancestor of the founders of the Zhou dynasty, an expert at grain cultivation. He is supposed to have been minister of agriculture for the ancient sage kings Yao and Shun, when he taught people how to sow seed.

Yi Yin was a minister of the Shang dynasty, a respected savant, reputed author of an early Taoist text.

5.

how can the self still be there?

One of the basic Buddhist meditations consists of analysis of existence into elements, then examining them for self. A somewhat more common version of this exercise, which is designed to overcome fixation on self, is to imagine oneself dead and decomposing.

7.

Here's someone who can relax himself!

ZZ understands "relax yourself" to imply finding solace. Is this a joke on superficial Confucian scholars who say they'd like to reform the world, but will settle for solace in a privileged position?

8.

Some see in this section a reflection of awareness of the Buddhist notion of rebirth. The contentment expressed in having no wife or children, moreover, a horror in conventional Chinese culture, may also reflect an image of Buddhism. Chinese intellectuals were at first appalled by celibate Buddhist renunciants; this passage of Master Lie may reflect a Buddhist response, to refrain from reproducing as an expedient for freeing oneself from social and economic pressures.

9.

Zigeng and Master Yan were distinguished disciples of Confucius. The home-leaver is called wrong, as much as the ambition-seeker. Thus 'balance in the center' is the remedy, like the middle way of Buddhism. This section therefore balances the preceding; together they illustrate the progression from attachment to deliberate detachment to spontaneous nonattachment, finally to reach the state of 'being in the world but not of the world.'

11.

Yu Xiong was a savant of the Zhou dynasty. Erstwhile teacher of King Wen of Zhou, he was enfeoffed in Chu, a region culturally different in some ways from the Zhou heartland, supposedly noted for shamanism. The 'difference' of Chu is a significant theme in Taoist literature.

12.

Changluzi was a Taoist from Chu who lived during the era of Warring States, supposed to be author of a book bearing his name as a title.

Worry about the sky falling, also found in Western lore, is used at one level to illustrate the fallacies of paranoid thinking. Here Master Lie goes on to show how obsession with the unknowable impedes appreciation of the evident.

13.

Shun is one of the three great leaders of ancient times—Yao, Shun, and Yu—who represent transmission and succession of leadership on the basis of merit rather than heredity. This segment illustrates a Taoist admonition to rulers, that they don't own what they have charge of, be it their systems, their selves, or their successors. This acknowledgement of non-possession is believed to enable a leader to make more objective decisions than a narrow sense of self-interest might otherwise suggest.

II. The Yellow Emperor

1.

For material on the Yellow Emperor, see *Ten Questions* and *Talk on Supreme Guidance for the World* in *Sex, Health, and Long Life* by Thomas Cleary.

2.

The existence of mountainous isles of immortals in the ocean to the east was taken literally by some people, notably the First Emperor of China and the Martial Emperor of the Han dynasty.

The Tsuchi-no-kumo people of ancient Japan claimed to be descendants of a prince of the proto-Chinese Zhou dynasty. If the journey was possible one way, it could also be possible that people had come back with stories of islands of Korea and Japan, which would have been less populous and more peaceful than the Chinese Warring States.

Esoterically, this passage contains a number of exercises and instructions for Taoist practices.

Ingesting air and dew stands for breathing exercises and swallowing saliva. Swallow saliva is considered beneficial for the stomach and digestion. It is particularly important when abstaining from grain and dieting on fruits and nuts.

The mind like a deep spring is unruffled deep down even when the surface is agitated.

The body like a virgin girl is not penetrated by external energies, meaning that physical health is not ravaged by contact with the world.

Having no familiars or intimates refers to freedom from bias, and also to nonattachment and objectivity. To have immortals and sages as

subjects means to be in command of one's own spiritual and intellectual faculties.

Not intimidating or getting angry is a means of saving energy, and also an art of interaction. To have the eager and honest for servants means to be in control of one's intentions and attitudes.

Giving no charity yet sufficing everyone means acting justly. Not accumulating or saving yet suffering no lack means spending wisely.

Harmony of yin and yang means appropriate proportions of rest and activity, flexibility and firmness. Sun and moon always clear means that intellect and intuition are both operative.

Regularity of the four seasons refers to regularity of rhythm of daily activities and nocturnal rest; timely nursing refers to recuperation after expending energy, before the onset of exhaustion and breakdown. Constant abundance of crops means energy constantly renewed by good rhythm and timely rest. No plague in the land and no early death means that these habits are supposed to minimize illness and lessen causes of premature death.

No pestilence among animals means that the physical appetites and processes remain normal. No apparitions of ghosts means having no mental abnormalities.

3.

These are instructions for meditation. Riding on the wind refers to breathing exercises, walking in the sky refers to mental abstraction or ecstasy. This does not refer to a final state; the merging of the sense mentioned is a transitional experience, not intended to be a normative condition. That is why, after "having made progress" Master Lie is said to have *returned* riding on the wind, using intention to direct the mind, breath, and bodily sense back to the ordinary world after having transcended it mentally in a state of abstraction.

4.

The image of invulnerability to water and fire is fairly common in Buddhist scriptures. In that context, water and fire stand for desire and anger; these are the two emotions most involved in creating complications in life. Being able to go through water and fire unscathed symbolizes being in the world yet at the same time mentally transcendent, *going beyond things without fear.*

Protection of pure energy means keeping mental energy inwardly whole, not scattered, not sticking to things, not impinged upon by things.

Living by measure without excess refers to ordinary life science, taking care of needs but not indulging in the unnecessary.

Taking refuge in a beginningless order means sensing this balance inwardly, not imposing an arbitrary regime outwardly.

5.

This story represents a learning technique also used in Buddhism, known in Sanskrit as *samadhi* or absorption. To become one with an art, the learner becomes so absorbed as to become oblivious of all else while performing.

6.

This story symbolizes an ideal government of a diverse domain, illustrating the principles of adapting to conditions and balancing natural tendencies.

7.

Like story number 5 preceding, this is an illustration of a learning technique, aloof of the world while absorbed in an art, pure action free of hope and fear, liberating natural capacity to the fullest.

8.

Destiny here, as elsewhere in Master Lie, refers to the sum of forces beyond anyone's dominion or control. *What is already there* refers to capacity, which develops naturally with use. Development of capacity is possible, but presumption of ultimate success is not.

9.

This is a portrait of a concentration technique. The famed Chan Buddhist master Dahui, who had many lay disciples, often quoted ancient Buddhist scripture saying, "If you put your mind on one point, there's nothing that cannot be accomplished." The end of this story in Master Lie, implying

that concentration is required before higher things, also suggests a certain order. Buddhist literature likens knowledge without concentration to a candle in the wind. To be useful, higher knowledge requires a corresponding stabilization of mind, it is held; but this can be developed in a humbler context, as the story says, meaning the midst of the world and the tasks therein. Even minor arts require concentration to perfect them; even more so major arts.

10.

This story depicts mind-to-mind communication, which became a watchword in Chan Buddhism. In martial arts, the ability to sense an opponent's intention while masking one's own is a strategic art based on energetic principles. Intent generates energy that can be sensed, it is alleged, even before it takes shape in physical action. The next stage is that of discerning the minute outward signs of inner movement, such as may be observed in posture, gesture, expression, etc. These are some of the so-called 'tells' of expert card players who use these observations to inform their betting strategies.

The story concludes that *perfect words make no claim* and *perfect action has no contrivance* to distinguish deliberate "perception management" from heart-to-heart communication of true intent.

11.

A Buddhist image for enlightened existence in the ordinary world is that of a lotus blooming in fire. In the story, the man's ignorance, or innocence, represents realization of emptiness. According to the Buddhist master Nagarjuna, "emptiness is departure from all views." In Master Lie, the ability of Confucius to *not do* it represents the caveat with which Nagarjuna follows up his definition of emptiness as departure from views: "but those who make emptiness a view are incurable." In Buddhist terms the miracle man is what is called an *arhat,* someone who has escaped the limitations of the world, so much so that he cannot even understand its problems anymore. In Buddhist terms, Master Lie's image of Confucius then represent the *bodhisattva* who can enter the ultimate peace of *nirvana* at will but also has the fortitude and will not to do so, instead remaining in the world to work for the sake of others.

12.

Chan Buddhist lore also refers to being inscrutable to others by dint of inner abstraction, yielding no information even on the most subtle level, thus being impossible to "read."

In political science, inscrutability is considered important for leaders to elicit candor from subordinates by giving them no way to use flattery and no way to anticipate anger.

Projection of various moods and attitudes to test people by their reactions is also part of this aspect of political science. With familiars in particular, superficial show is not necessarily enough to create the intended impression, so deliberate manipulation of inner moods to project particular impressions is also part of political science.

The Taoist *Master of Demon Valley* expounds these principles and practices of testing people and finding out their real thoughts, including techniques of concentration to develop the required mental skills. This important text is translated in *Thunder in the Sky.*

According to Chan Buddhist tradition, once when a monk from India, a canonical master, gained a reputation for mind-reading in Tang dynasty China, the emperor of China introduced him to one of the National Teachers, a high monk of the Chan sect of Buddhism.

"Tell me, where am I now?" the Chan master asked the Indian canon master.

"You are the teacher of a whole nation," replied the Indian monk; "how can you go to Sichuan to watch boat races?"

The Chan master asked again, "Tell me, where am I now?"

The Indian monk said, "You are the teacher of a whole nation—how can you watch the monkeys play on Tianjing Bridge?"

The Chan master asked a third time, as before. This time the canonical master remained silent for a long time. In the end he couldn't tell where the Chan master had gone. The National Teacher scolded him, "You sprite! Where is your mind-reading power?"

A later Chan master explained, "The first two times his mind was on objects; the third time he entered self-experienced absorption, so he was imperceptible."

This inscrutability is typically summed up in the expression, "Angels find no path on which to strew flowers, devils find no door through which to spy."

15.

Lao Dan is the Old Master, reputed author of the *Tao Te Ching*. He declares Yang Zhu impossible to teach because he is inwardly full of himself, while the worldly people react to the air of importance and the mood of deflation he projects when affirmed and denied.

17.

This represents the original principles of *Taijiquan* and *Jujutsu.*

18.

This refutation of racism includes species bias; so it not only addresses the problem of Han-centrism in China, which is still an express concern in the modern Chinese constitution, but also the conceit of human rapacity

indulging itself at the expense of other species and the environmental basis of all life.

Fu Xi, Nu Wa, Shen Nong, and Yu were ancient leaders and culture heroes of Chinese myth and legend. Jie of Xia, Zhou of Yin, Huan of Lu, and Mu of Chu, in contrast, were anti-heroes and villains of Chinese tradition. The heroes appeared nonhuman but were humane, while the villains appeared human but were bestial. This illustrates the Taoist practice of considering substance more than form, character rather than class.

The image of pristine harmony between humans and other animals giving way to fear and avoidance can thus be taken as an analogical critique of Chinese relations with other peoples, suggesting that inharmonious relations were at least in part the fault of ethnocentric abuse of others, said to be common during the Han and Jin dynasties, when Chinese of Qiang, Hu, Di, and other minorities were treated by second-class citizens by the Han elites.

19.

This story criticizes rulers who placated people by illusory changes in policy without real effect. It also satirizes people who swallow their illusions whole and don’t think about them.

20.

This story illustrates a principle of martial arts and military science classically summarized as *awaiting movement in a state of stillness.* The idea is to remain unmoved and induce an opponent to take on form first, and then counter that initiative. The one who takes the initiative and thereby takes on form is temporarily defined and limited by that configuration, that commitment, so the strategy of counter-attack takes advantage of that definition and limitation.

21.

Confucius and Mo Di were both revered as founders of influential movements, although orthodox state Confucianism morphed into something quite different from the teachings of Confucius, and the school of Mo Di died out, in part by self-immolation. Confucius emphasized humanity and justice, Mo Di practiced defense of the weak against aggression from the powerful. Their teachings are more complex, but these basic attitudes are what Hui Ang refers to in alluding to methods of self-preservation by winning the goodwill of others through altruism. Hui Ang adds that with the resources of kingship it should be possible to outdo Confucius and Mo Di, providing only that the king actually have the will.

Here the mechanisms of inner sense and response, contextualized in human and inter-species interaction, is set in the context of ruler-populace relations. In that sense Hui Ang shows the king that force and coercion are

inefficient compared to charisma, in view of the relative expenditure of energy; and that real charisma comes from intuitive sense and response, rather than superficial assertion and insistence.

III. King Mu of Zhou

1.

King Mu also appears in *The Golden Broth of Buddhism,* where he is alleged to have had a dream vision of Buddha. The Far West is sometimes said to be India, but here it probably refers to Central Asia.

According to *Lost Stories of Immortals,* a Taoist collection, "King Mu of Zhou was named Man. He was born of Empress Pang, son of King Zhao. When King Zhao failed to return from an inspection tour of the South, King Mu then assumed the throne; he was fifty years old at the time. He reigned for fifty-four years, to the age of one hundred and four.

"The king was attracted to the way of spiritual immortals in his youth, and he always liked to travel around the land, after the manner of the Yellow Emperor. So it was that he rode a wagon drawn by eight horses of the finest quality, with Zao Fu [the archetypal charioteer] as his driver, to the countries of the West. He caught a white fox and a black badger, which he sacrificed to the source of the Yellow River.

"He directed his carriage across the Weak Water River, and turtles, tortoises, and alligators formed a bridge; finally he went up Mortar

Mountain He also toasted the Matriarch of the West at Jade Pond.

“The Matriarch sang, ‘White clouds are in the sky. The road is very long, punctuated by mountains and rivers; if you don’t die, you can come again.’

“The king replied, ‘I’m going back East to harmonize the Chinese states so that all the people are equal. I hope to see you; I’ll return in three years.’

“He also went to Mt. Laishou and Mt. Taixing before finally entering his ancestral Zhou.

“At that time Yin Xi had already crossed the Gobi Desert and was living in a rustic abode north of Zhongnan. The king followed his old trail and summoned the recluses Yin Yue and Du Zhong to live in the hermitage; then he named it a cloister, and went there with them. Ji Fu came calling from the game reserve of Zheng and cautioned him about the rebellion of Xu Yuan, so the king returned to his country, and the ancestral shrines were restored to safety.

“When the king went to the Kunlun Mountains, he drank stone marrow from Bee Mountain, and ate the fruits of jade trees. He also climbed Jade Cluster Mountain, where the Matriarch of the West lived.

“He had thoroughly mastered the way to make the spirit fly to heaven, but he appeared to live in physical form simply in order to appear

to the people to have died.

"Indeed, he had drunk oil of jade, savored the taste of sweet snow, white lotus, and black dates, green lotus-root and white citrus; all of these are dishes of spiritual immortals—how could they not lengthen life?

"It is also said that the Matriarch of the West descended into the palace of King Mu and they left together riding on the clouds."

The Kunlun Mountains are an ancient source of jade, highly prized in China, and the Kunlun came to be considered one of the abodes of immortals. The Jade Pond is so named because jade was found in water in Central Asia. The Matriarch is commonly said to be a goddess, but Celtic legend and modern archeology confirm the existence of a skilled an artistic people with fair hair, as the Matriarch is said to have had, in that time and place. Ancient Celts called Tuatha De Danann, People of Divine Arts, are said to have originated in Scythia, which could be understood to abut or even include the oases of the Kunlun, and they are particularly associated with Druidism, which had some demonstrable affinities to Taoism.

When he woke up, the king was still sitting where he had been before, in the same company as before. When he looked in front of him, his wine had not yet settled, the hors d'oeuvres were still fresh. The theme of using a dreamlike state or hypnotic trance to test a prospective student is

found in various cultures and traditions. In Taoism, the dream of Lu Dongbin is particularly famous (Cf. *Vitality, Energy, Spirit,* pp. 64-70)

2.

When Lao Dan went West refers to the story of Laozi, reputed author of the *Tao Te Ching,* who is said to have left China because of the deteriorating social and political conditions. He was later said to have gone to India, but here the West most likely means Central Asia, seen as a sort of Shangri-la.

Five Emperors and Three Kings refer to Confucian culture heroes, exemplary leaders of the past. There are several different lists of names for each, as they are not usually elaborated but normally referred to generally in a categorical or symbolic sense.

Some were magically accomplished—according to the Sanskrit *Hitopadesa,* a famous book of practical and political science, "success may take place even by subterfuge."

3.

Buddhism uses the dream as a metaphor for the process of mistaking mental phenomena for external objects, or cognitive representations of things for things in themselves. The description or representation (*vijnapti*) that the brain constructs of select data is the world as we cognize it. Taking that as purely objective, without considering the role of perceptual and cognitive selection and construction, is likened to being caught in a dream.

4.

What was called the *nature vs. nurture* debate in the West was also treated in the East. Typically, however, while coming down on one side of the argument this text is trying to balance an ambient bias, in this case prejudice against 'other' peoples of different cultures. The idea that differences of character come from adaptations to different environments removes the noxious absolutism of racism, implying that people are malleable and adaptable, and not inherently 'good' or 'bad' apart from any context.

5.

The idea that dream life could provide reflection of suppressed feelings and/or a compensatory mechanism also occurred to psychoanalysts in the West, who likewise thought that this recognition could suggest ways of adjusting waking life to lessen subconscious tension.

6.

This story illustrates the construction of a conceptual reality from fragments of experience grasped at second hand. It demonstrates the buildup of conceptual and descriptive ambiguity and confusion, a commentary on problems of information transmission, especially loss of content and incorporation of interfering signals into the stream of communication and interpretation.

7.

This story contains a satire of the doctrine of inherited debt preached by the Taoist cult of Celestial Masters. Adapted from the Buddhist doctrine of karma and retribution, the doctrine of inherited debt holds that illness results from wrongdoing. This accounts for such procedures as writing confessions and solitary contemplation of one's sins, as well as protective charms against vengeful spirits, used by the healers of the Celestial Masters sect. One point of this story is that the mental state created by contemplating 'inherited debt' and considering illness a product of sin may itself be morbid.

The characterization of the original 'ailment' of forgetfulness represents a worldly view of unwordliness, while the sobriety of the 'cure' is worldliness as represented by the Confucians, whose profession is associated with ruling and controlling the world. The Celestial Masters movement was as Confucian as Taoist, as secular as sacred, in this sense, that social organization, regulation of members' lives, and hierarchical government were always part of the movement.

From the point of view of healing, this story contrasts the quietistic method with the contemplative method, in terms of predictable side-effects and their potential consequences in stimulating a new cycle of illness. From a cultic point of view, insofar as unsuccessful cures were blamed on

the patient, the sense of regret and remorse may make the patient sicker but also more dependent upon the ministration of the cult.

8.

The gentlemen of Lu refers to Confucians, particularly Han-centric absolutist pedants. *Lao Dan* is supposed to be Laozi, who typically deflates absolutism. Lao Dan cites relativity as a reality, not a rationalization of subjective self-affirmation; he does not say there is no sanity or madness, but that the crucial question is their relative proportion.

9.

This story illustrates the power of suggestion overriding reality. Modern experiments validate this observation. In one study subjects who were told they were going to hear the sound of a cat purring were pleased by the sound of a man snoring, while subjects told they were going to hear the sound of a man snoring were displeased by the sound of a cat purring.

IV. Confucius

1.

This story suggests that even if a specific system cannot by its very nature be absolute, that does not mean it has no relative value. In Buddhist terms, this is conventionally referred to as transcending the world without destroying the features of the world.

2.

A fuller version of this encounter, in the text entitled *The Master of the Hidden Storehouse,* also illustrates the principle of transcending the world without destroying its features. It begins with the master mourning one of the associates of Laozi; an apprentice asks, "Everyone in the world dies—why do you mourn him?" The master answered, "Everyone in the world mourns; how can I not mourn?" The apprentice said, "But mourners grieve, whereas you have never sorrowed; what about that?" The master replied, "I have no pleasure or happiness with anyone in the world—what would bring on sorrow? Remove the solid, and there is liquid; remove liquid, and there is gas. Remove gas, and there is emptiness; remove emptiness, and there is the Way. The Way is the means of preserving the spirit. Virtue is the means of broadening capacity. Etiquette is the means of equalizing manners. Things are the means of supporting the body. In something that should be white, blackness is considered pollution; in something that should be black, whiteness is considered pollution. So how do we know what in the world is truly pure or polluted? For this reason, I do not focus solely on the purity or pollution of things. Those whose vision is dim mistake yellow for red and blue for grey. Now how do we know that what we call black and white would not be considered red and yellow by the perceptive? And how do we know what in the world are true colors? For this reason, I do not get lost in the colors of things. Those whose fondness for money is

extreme do not see anything else as likeable; those who fondness for horses is extreme do not see anything else as likeable; those whose fondness for books is extreme do not see anything else as likeable. So how do we know what in the world is actually likeable or detestable? For this reason I do not see anything to be attached to. Nothing can mix me up!" *Thunder in the Sky* pp. 102-103

3.

The *Three Kings* here refers to the founders of the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties, the classical age of Chinese history. The *Five Emperors* of high antiquity are variously listed, as are the culture heroes known as the *Three August Ones.*

The statement *There is a sage among the people of the West,* according to a Buddhist collection called *The Gold Broth of Buddhism*, alludes to the historical Buddha.

4.

Zixia, You Hui, Zigeng, Zilu, and Zizhang were all noted disciples of Confucius.

13.

Han Tan and Gongsun Long were logicians. The image of the archer hitting arrow after arrow in succession to form a solid line of arrows that never hits the ground is a very clever illustration of the Buddhist doctrine that

cognitive reality is based on a subjectively constructed continuity of conception linking successive perceptions into an internally consistent picture, never ‘hitting the ground’ of objective reality.

V. Questions of Tang

1.

Tang of Yin (r. 1766-1753 BCE) was the founder of the Shang dynasty (1766-1122 BCE). Ji of Xia was one of his officers.

Nu Wa was a legendary prehistoric leader, pictured as a woman. Gonggong was a legendary figure of a different ethnic group. Zhuanxu, an ancient chieftain, is reckoned in some lists as one of the Five Emperors of antiquity.

Bo Yi was the ancestor of the royal family of Qin, traditionally pictured as an expert in herding and hunting, put in charge of supervising mountains and wilds by king Shun (2255-2205 BCE)

Yi Jian was a legendary encyclopedist.

The Master of Expanded Development was traditionally portrayed as a teacher of the Yellow Emperor, supposed to have lived for more than twelve centuries.

This story emphasizes the roles of history and environment in conditioning people and other forms of life. This understanding helps

overcome chauvinistic bias, wherein the familiar becomes unconsciously absolutized as the standard against which everything is judged.

2.

This story alludes to the relativity of time and the practical difference between a narrow short-term view and a broad long-term view, in respect to the energy that can be released and directed to a given end.

3.

This story seems to suggest some sort of awareness of societies and civilizations preceding the ancient dynasties, consciousness of gigantic achievements of the immemorial past, now become part of the surroundings. This theme of worlds and events in an inconceivably remote past having produced conditions of the present is prominent in Ekayana Buddhist scriptures. Archeological finds confirm civilizations along the Yellow River long before the Xia dynasty.

4.

This point-counterpoint illustrates the Buddhist proposition that conditional origination implies emptiness of inherent existence.

5.

Guan Zhong (Guan Yiwu, or Guanzi, Master Guan) was a minister of Duke Huan of the state of Qi (r. 685-643 BCE). Guan devised a program for

enriching and strengthening the state. Xi Peng was also an assistant to Duke Huan.

6.

Made into policies by rulers, these are made into customs by subjects, and so nothing to wonder at. This is another critique of the limitation of Han-centrism, explaining customs as human artifice, representative of differences that are acquired and not intrinsic.

7.

This story illustrates how logic can be limited by its premises, as reasoning can be logical in its own terms and yet lead to false conclusions because of faulty framing of the problem under consideration.

8.

This story represents the 'soft art.' Applied to physical health, it means adjusting sensitively to minute changes to minimize the stress of resistance. Applied to statesmanship, it represents balancing the forces of state structure by means of each other, rather than be crushed or torn asunder by standing between them trying to control them separately.

9.

JY: "In the overall process from birth to death, people change again and again; if you look upon your childhood from the perspective of old age, the differences in appearance and intelligence are even greater than the two

men whose bodies were switched. However, the course of change in the overall process is in minute shifts, and since people base their perceptions on them, they are unaware of the changes. Here where the physician has replaced their hearts, however, everyone is surprised by the change because it is so sudden."

13.

Pan Yu and Mo Di were military engineers. The dismantling of the manikin represents a Buddhist meditation technique of analysis, in which the practitioner inwardly analyzes body and mind into elements to observe that an absolute self or soul cannot be located in any element, or indeed in any combination of elements.

14.

This story illustrates the origin of esotericism as a protective device, to eliminate the factor of competition and struggle for supremacy, excluding those who approach an art for purposes of personal aggrandizement or aggression against others. This is why candidates for mystic sciences associated with power are tested so severely.

15.

This story illustrates the technique of 'using intent, not strength' that underlies the soft martial arts This technique saves energy, and is used in

‘lightening’ the body for health purposes by reducing the complex of gross muscular tensions experienced as weight or heaviness in movement.

16.

This story illustrates the martial art of *diankong* that works by attacking sensitive points to paralyze muscles by interfering with nerves. Some also see in this a sort of parody of popular rebellions against the Han dynasty that did not manage to destroy tyranny but did weaken the dynasty.

17.

The West refers to Central Asia, a major source of jade. The red edge on the knife was probably corundum or ruby dust. Ruby is the gem quality of corundum and is considerably harder than jade and jadeite, suitable for creating an abrasive tool for the notoriously difficult task of working jade. Notice of a Central Asian ambassador to China in a Taoist history also mentions a diplomatic gift of a Central Asian glue of extraordinary strength, described in terms that suggest it could have been used to fix corundum or ruby dust to steel. The cloth laundered in fire was woven of asbestos fibers.

VI. Effort and Destiny

The word for destiny or fate means order or imperative; in this usage it was anciently thought of as a divine command. In Buddhism, among five inconceivables is listed cause and effect, meaning that even a Buddha cannot fully understand the totality of cause and effect relations.

This is to be understood in a context of intensive investigation of causality, and does not imply fatalism at all, but rather acknowledgement of human limitation. The range of causal factors beyond our ken may be called destiny or fate, according to our perceptions. Here in Master Lie, destiny is cited in unspoken contrast to three contemporary belief systems: the Legalistic doctrine of containing all activity within a humanly constructed rule of law; the Confucian concept of human organizations being sustained by a divine order that would respond to certain behavior with specific results; and the immortalist concept of countermanding the natural order by deliberate practices.

In sum, the concept of destiny or fate in Master Lie is not a mark of fatalism, but a challenge to absolutist concepts of control and causation. Neither the moral determinism of Confucianism nor the psychological determinism of Legalism had produced the society they had envisioned; and no philosophy accounted entirely for the ups and downs of human affairs.

1.

Destiny's concluding remarks in this story reveal the nature of the teaching presented here. Destiny may overrule effort, but that does not imply an external omnipotent will with a fixed agenda. Here, 'destiny' is a default term, and what it signifies does not replace effort or reduce it to meaninglessness, but requires a larger perspective on effort, and a more

flexible understanding than simplistic schemes of punishment and reward such as were invoked and applied by the Legalist doctrine of state on the human level, and by the Celestial Masters cult in supernatural terms.

The Sanskrit *Hitopadesa* is adamant about the ignorance of those who give up effort believing in fate. According to the 17th century Japanese Confucian Yamaga Soko, 'making peace with destiny' refers to destiny as the action of nature that is beyond human capacity. Psychologically, he interprets this is a counter to resentment and bitterness, not an admonition to resign intention and effort.

3.

Guan Yiwu was Guan Zhong, a famous practical philosopher of the seventh century BCE, cited above in note V.5. The work associated with his name, augmented in later times, has been labeled Taoist as well as Legalist. For the specifically Taoist portions of the classic, see *The Way of the World: Readings in Chinese Philosophy.*

The notion of people acting as they do because they have no choice under the circumstances prevailing, by appearing as one extreme, presents a counterpoint to a traditional Chinese model of history that emphasizes individual persons as history makers and authors of their own ethical choices. While this view lends itself to moralizing, as was the wont of Confucians, it can convey the impression of personality, character, and

motive as being prime movers, with inadequate consideration of the conditions that form people and influence their actions. Personal philosophies or preferences may not exert as much influence on actions as other factors, hence this story illustrates how the force of circumstances cannot be ignored even if personal qualities factor into political considerations.

4.

This story also illustrates the idea that the sum total of forces in any situation, the structure of necessities, possibilities, and perils created by conditions, is larger than any of the players, whose roles and relations may therefore alter unforeseeably, or uncontrollably.

5.

This story also emphasizes the idea that the totality of causality is not entirely within human control, whether individual or collective; this principle of uncertainty is represented by the concept of destiny or fate in order to modify the influence of presumptions and expectations.

6.

This story seems to refute the common notion of supernatural causes of illness, an idea cults relied upon heavily in magical curing practices. There is a famous story in early Chan Buddhist tradition that invokes the background belief in sin being the cause of sickness, and illustrates the

meditation used by the last doctor. A layman came to the Second Patriarch of Chan and said, "I am sick all over. Please absolve me." The Patriarch said, "Bring me your sin and I'll absolve you of it." After a long silence, the man said, "When I look for my sin, I can't find it." The Patriarch said, "I've absolved you of your sin." Then the patriarch taught him that 'mind is Buddha, mind is the teaching.' The man said, "Today for the first time I've realized that sinfulness is not on the inside, not on the outside, and not in between." After that his illness gradually remitted.

A story is also told of the Second Patriarch of the Tiantai school of Buddhism, Huisi, illustrating the introspective contemplation referred to in the Chan story as 'looking for my sin.' Once Huisi became so weak he couldn't even get up and walk after a meditation intensive. Then he reflected, "Sickness arises from *karma*, karma comes from mind; if the mental source is not agitated, what are external objects like? Sickness, karma, and the body too are all like shadows of clouds." After practicing this contemplation, he recovered. His disciple Zhiyi, famed as the de facto founder of the Tiantai school and author of the monumental *Stopping and Seeing* series of manuals on meditation, came from a Taoist family and included Taoist healing visualizations of the internal organs in his meditation instructions. See *Sitting Meditation* for some of these practices.

7.

Formulas for physical culture and immortalism abound, but they are not guaranteed to work automatically. *It's better not to look to divine will and try to figure out gain and loss* means that informed reason is more effective than superstition when it comes to maintaining health.

8.

Here the idea of destiny is used to maintain emotional and intellectual equilibrium in face of changing conditions. This makes it possible to maintain the will, because it cannot be crushed by the frustration of expectations. Therefore the *trust in destiny* spoken of here is not fatalism but freedom—*who can block the way?*

9.

This story illustrates the handicapping effect of blind belief in destiny. Each of the characters thinks his own way is right and sufficient, as if it were his destiny, thus failing to learn and communicate, synthesize and integrate, because of the preconception that a personal inclination is destined or fated to be. In historical context, this story satirizes the political philosophers who each claimed to have *the* Way, and who all failed to save society from disintegration.

10.

The Buddhist *Sandhinirmocana-sutra* says, "Enlightened beings do know the bliss of nirvana very well and can quickly realize it, yet they relinquish

immediate experience of the state of bliss and rouse a mind of great aspiration to benefit living beings, without object, without expectation, and therefore remain in the midst of many kinds of suffering over a long time." (*Buddhist Yoga* pg. 75)

11.

This is a commentary on the folly of immortalism. A ruler may wish to live forever, but if that were possible there would already be an immortal ruler.

12.

Changes in conditions appear differently depending on the point of comparison. When nothing can be done about an event, it may be possible to understand it or accept it to a greater or lesser extend depending on the context in which it is considered.

VII. Yang Zhu

An academic convention concerning the doctrines of Yang Zhu is to construct an image of Yang Zhu from the description of Mencius and then wonder at this book of Master Lie.

1.

Guan Zhong initiated reforms in Qi, in the 7th century BCE, establishing government monopolies and instituting economic warfare on other states. Qi was greatly strengthened by such measures.

Mr. Tian was Tian Cheng, a minister of the state of Qi in the 5th century BCE. In 481 he assassinated the lord of Qi, set up a successor of his own choice, and took over as prime minister. Eventually his great-grandson Tian He became a feudal lord and ruler of Qi.

Yao and Shun were ancient rulers, allegedly of the 3rd millennium BCE. Xu You and Shan Juan were recluses. Bo Yi and Shou Qi were nobles of the Shang dynasty who wouldn't join the new Zhou order when it supplanted the Shang politically, considering it disloyal to do so. Hence they are considered purists, but they 'refused to eat the grain of Zhou' and died of starvation in the mountains

3.

Contemplating rotting corpses and skeletons was a standard part of early Buddhist meditation, either in actual graveyards or by visualization. In actual practice, such a negative meditation is supposed to be followed up by positive meditations on kindness and compassion. This story makes the point that sameness in death does not imply sameness in life, that our destiny to die does not render the present life indifferent or meaningless, but rather the opposite—the inevitability of death for good and bad alike implies that whatever choices we have, moral or otherwise, are all played out in the context of life. This contemplation of death and concluding focus

on life thus parallels the Buddhist practice of contemplating death followed by cultivation of friendliness and compassion.

4.

Bo Yi and Liu Xiahui represent extremes of moralism. Yuan Xia and Zigeng were disciples of Confucius.

6.

While this story is often very effective as a test, the crux is in the contrast between internal versus external control, natural order versus imposed regime.

7.

With the amassing of enormous fortunes by a few, and the development of chronic poverty among the multitudes, redistribution of wealth was necessary for social stability. This might be done through land redistribution programs enacted by the government, or by clan or religious organizations, or by private charity. Some of the people considered saints in Taoist traditions were Confucian officials who actually put humanitarian teachings into practice and helped the needy. In this story, the rich man distributed his excess wealth without considering it charity, or covert commerce. This reflects an analogy of the Buddhist concept of perfect charity characterized by so-called *emptiness of the three spheres,* meaning charity given without the sense of self as being generous, without a view of

others as being needy, and without either pride or regret at the value of the gift.

8.

Even a hundred years is too long, to say nothing of the misery of perpetual life. This is an ironic twist on the argument about immortality—not whether it's possible, because it's not—even if it were, what would be the point?

9.

This is a study in balancing extremes, and a representation of the relativity of reason to context. Lao Dan is Laozi, Guan Yu is Guan Zhong. Both are associated with self-preservation. Great Yu was responsible for controlling flood waters in antiquity, Mo Di was leader of a band of volunteer warriors who defended the weak against the strong during the Era of Warring States; thus both represent service of others.

This story seems to contrast these two standpoints, self-preservation and service of others, but in doing so conserves both as contexts calling for conclusions consistent with themselves but not over-generalized to universals. Generalization into universals pits them against each other; consistency with their own contexts enables them to complement one another. Since both self-preservation and service to society are normal parts of life, varying in proportion from time to time but nonetheless

mutually interdependent, therefore conserving the functions of both is better than dissipating their energy in mutual antagonism.

10.

This story questions idealization of sagehood as a magical condition, and idealization of material prosperity and pleasure. It deflates the notion that the ideal state runs itself while the sage ruler does nothing; and the notion that people's worth is reflected by their rewards in life.

12.

The Three August Ones, Five Emperors, and Three Kings, as classical models of Confucian ideology, are cited here to represent ideological structuring of views. This story highlights the folly of ideological conflict, as it can consume all sense of meaning, robbing the obsessed of any other purpose in life, including the basic experiences of life itself, sacrificed for the sake of an imaginary ideal.

15.

This story takes another look at reputation and reality. While it typically rebukes the folly of concern for reputation at the expense of reality, a way of life providing no peace, yet it is careful to conserve an objective understanding of the reality of reputation. Slander and libel are illegal, not because they injure self-esteem, but because they compromise the ability to make a living and otherwise function normally in society. While it is folly

to pursue a false or vain reputation, that doesn't mean that the consensual reality of reputation and its consequences can be safely ignored.

VIII. The Tally of the Teaching

1.

This story illustrates the principle of 'arriving first by leaving last,' used in martial arts to signify the tactic of remaining still while awaiting movement on the part of the opponent, then countering that movement. The idea is to have the opponent take the initiative, as doing so creates a form, making a counter-strike possible.

2.

Observe exits to know entries, observe goings to know comings means to examine past history to predict future behavior.

3.

The *Tao Te Ching* says, "If you know when you have enough, you won't be disgraced; if you know when to stop, you won't be endangered. This way you can live a long time."

4.

Sages do not examine survival and destruction, they examine the reasons for them. Focus is on cause rather than result, because thinking about the desired result can distract and disrupt the operation of concentration on the means of attaining that aim.

6.

Considering the quantity of produce required to feed and clothe a person for three years, this story provokes a consideration of the productivity of the earth. One of the traditions of Legalism and Taoism is that commercial art and luxury trade should not supersede basic production as the foundation of the economy, as this would make a state dependent on others for a sufficiency of foodstuffs and raw materials.

10.

...all the thieves fled to Qin. This is an excellent crack at Qin Legalism. The policy of Qin, based on the Legalist doctrines of The Lord of Shang, was to take from others, luring population with exemptions, draining other states of basic goods by market manipulation, and taking land by expansionist warfare.

12.

The Duke of Bai was a grandee of Chu during the Era of the Warring States. He tried to engineer a coup, but was thwarted and strangled himself to death in his bathhouse.

Confucius is here portrayed as a perceptive, exercising extreme caution in responding to the Duke lest he get caught up in a plot, yet making his point, however subtly and however futilely, to warn the Duke against rash ambition.

13.

The Di were tribes living in several of the pre-Chinese states during the Zhou dynasty.

19.

The *Tao Te Ching* says, “Sages want not to want, and do not value hard-to-get goods. They learn not to imitate, and reform the mistakes of the crowd.”

20.

While they use different rationales, in each case the killers decide to kill. The story illustrates how a foregone conclusion or inherent bias may remain unaltered in changing situations, as it summons suitable rationales to assure arriving at the intended conclusion in any event.

21.

This story represents a powerful argument against leaving misunderstandings, false assumptions, and circumstantial evidence unexamined and uncorrected.

23.

The *Tao Te Ching* says, “Which is more important, your name or your body?”

25.

Unity was considered a political ideal, but its interpretation differed. In stereotyped terms, Legalism and Confucianism would impose unity, the former by law and the latter by ritual, whereas Taoism would discover it as an organic reality underlying difference. In actuality even theorists tended to combine these approaches to unity.

27.

Both Buddhism and Taoism recommend secret charity for this reason.

32.

This story illustrates the phenomenon of the 'tell,' when someone with a secret is unable to contain excitement, so that inward agitation creates an outward manifestation.

34.

Physiognomy and reading of bodily postures and movements were practiced in India as well as China. This practice is originally based on the 'tell' phenomenon noted above, but it can be distorted. This story illustrates the problem of underlying attitudes or assumptions dictating terms of interpretation.



THE ESSENTIAL Huainanzi

Liu An, King of Huainan

John S. Major • Sarah A. Queen • Andrew Seth Meyer • Harold D. Roth

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SKETCH OF EARLY CHINESE HISTORY, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE *HUAINANZI*

ca. 3500–2000 B.C.E.: Era of legendary sage-rulers

Appearance of advanced Neolithic jade-working cultures in several parts of China; complex chieftainships develop into protostates. The supposed era of the Divine Farmer, the Yellow Emperor, and other mythical sage-rulers and culture heroes.

ca. 1950–1550 B.C.E.: Xia dynasty

Dynasty supposedly founded by the flood-tamer Yu the Great. Beginning of the Bronze Age, beginning of hereditary monarchy. Last ruler is Tyrant Jie.

ca. 1550–1046 B.C.E.: Shang dynasty

Founded by Tang the Victorious. High Bronze Age culture: elaborate tombs and worship of royal ancestors, divination by means of oracle bones, earliest Chinese writing. Last ruler is Tyrant Djou.

1046–771 B.C.E.: Western Zhou dynasty

Founded by Kings Wen and Wu, consolidated by the Duke of Zhou. China is divided into numerous states ruled by aristocrats owing ritual and military support to the Zhou kings.

722–481 B.C.E.: Spring and Autumn period

Named for a chronicle kept by the dukes of Lu. Decline of Zhou royal power, emergence of large, powerful states and the *ba* “hegemon” system. Lifetime of Confucius (551–479 B.C.E.).

481–221 B.C.E.: Warring States period

Constant interstate warfare. Emergence of *shi* “knights” as a key social class. Numerous political thinkers debate ways to create an orderly, safe, and wellgoverned society.

221–206 B.C.E.: Qin dynasty

Last Zhou king dies in 256 B.C.E. State of Qin begins campaign to conquer remaining warring states and consolidate their territory into a single empire. Campaign succeeds in 221; ruler takes the title First Emperor of Qin. Ambitious but overreaching centralization of power. First Emperor dies in 210; Qin state collapses in 206.

206 B.C.E.–7 C.E.: Western (or Former) Han dynasty

206 B.C.E.: Liu Bang proclaims himself king of Han; takes title of emperor in 202. Liu Chang becomes first king of Huainan in 196.
195–188 B.C.E.: Emperor Hui.
188–180 B.C.E.: Interregnum of Empress Dowager Lü.
180–157 B.C.E.: Emperor Wen. Liu Chang dies in 174; kingdom of Huainan temporarily abolished. Liu An becomes second king of Huainan in 164.
157–141 B.C.E.: Emperor Jing. Kingdom of Huainan becomes a center of learning.
141–87 B.C.E.: Emperor Wu. *Huainanzi* presented to emperor in 139 B.C.E. Liu An dies and kingdom of Huainan ends in 122 B.C.E.

THE ESSENTIAL HUAINANZI

INTRODUCTION

The *Huainanzi* (*The Master of Huainan*) is a compendium of knowledge dating from early in China's Han dynasty (206 B.C.E.–220 C.E.). It was compiled under the auspices of, and probably with the active participation of, Liu An (179?–122 B.C.E.), the king of Huainan. Liu An was an influential member of the imperial family who ruled a sizable kingdom within the Han Empire. He also was known as an essayist, critic, poet, and patron of learning.

The *Huainanzi* was completed and presented to the imperial throne in 139 B.C.E. Its twenty-one chapters contain a comprehensive survey of contemporary knowledge, from self-cultivation techniques to the arts of rulership and from cosmology and geography to public speaking, military affairs, and the importance of education. The book's final chapter summarizes the entire work and claims that it synthesizes the best features of all other schools of thought, thereby creating a compact yet comprehensive distillation of all knowledge necessary for ruling the empire. For readers today, it opens a fascinating window into the intellectual and political life of China in the second century B.C.E.

Historical Background

For much of the first millennium B.C.E., China was divided into a large number of states ruled by members of a hereditary aristocracy. Those rulers were nominally subject to the authority of the kings of the Zhou dynasty (1046–256), but after the eighth century B.C.E. the power of the Zhou kings waned, and they had little control over state affairs. For a time, during the Spring and Autumn period (722–481), the state rulers themselves tried to keep order, recognizing a succession of first-among-equals strongmen called *ba* (hegemons) who exercised authority on behalf of the Zhou kings. But that system eventually broke down, and during the Warring States period (481–221), the states grew larger and more powerful but fewer in number as the larger states conquered and absorbed their smaller neighbors. Warfare and treachery were commonplace, and philosophers and political theorists had only moderate success devising systems of rulership that would restore order once again.

In the mid-third century B.C.E., just as the enfeebled Zhou dynasty was coming to an end, the king of the state of Qin embarked on a conscious program of conquest, intended to defeat the other states and bring all of China under his own dominion. Abolishing hereditary offices, the king instituted a merit-based bureaucracy in the state of Qin and mobilized the whole population for the twin purposes of agriculture and war. His campaign was successful, and the last of the Zhou-era states submitted to Qin in 221 B.C.E. Taking the newly coined title Qin Shihuangdi (First Emperor of Qin), he extended his strict laws and bureaucratic government throughout the country. He then embarked on an ambitious—and, as it proved to be, overly ambitious—program of public works: building roads, canals, a section of the Great Wall, and his own huge, magnificent tomb. When the First Emperor died in 210, the country erupted in rebellion and civil war, and the Qin dynasty collapsed. The causes of that collapse were complex, but the explanation widely accepted at the time emphasized the populace's resentment of the burden of taxes and labor service placed on them, as well as the regime's policy of inflicting severe punishments for even petty crimes.

The principle of a united China endured, however, after some initial backtracking. In 206 B.C.E., the rebel chieftain Liu Bang proclaimed himself king of Han, and four years later, having defeated the last of his rivals, he assumed the title of emperor. Having come to power, he had to decide what his new government would look like and to what extent it would reflect the centralizing tendencies of Qin. Initially the new emperor instituted a hybrid system, keeping most of western China under direct imperial control and dividing the lands in the rich eastern parts of the country into kingdoms, semiautonomous realms that were handed over to the emperor's important allies and relatives. At the time, this would have been seen as a perfectly normal policy, sanctified by centuries of use. Soon, however, the Han dynasty found itself involved in a generations-long struggle to define the proper relationship between the imperial government and the neofeudal kingdoms. Rebellions and plots against the imperial throne by various regional kings were brutally suppressed in 196, 174, and 154 B.C.E. Some scholars suggest that at least some of these "rebellions" were provoked, and perhaps fabricated, by imperial authorities as a way of eliminating the regional kings and bringing their territory under imperial control.

Liu An, the patron and editor of the *Huainanzi*, was a grandson of the Han dynasty's founder, Liu Bang. Liu An's father, Liu Chang, had been established as king of Huainan in 196 B.C.E., when he was still an infant. (The name of the kingdom means "south of the Huai River." At its largest extent, it encompassed the present-day Anhui and Jiangxi provinces and some adjacent territories.) In 174, the youthful Liu Chang was accused of rebellion and died on the road to exile. Although the kingdom of Huainan was temporarily abolished, it was reestablished (with much less territory) in 164, when Liu An, still in his teens, was named the second king of Huainan. He grew up to be a talented and ambitious monarch whose royal palace became a magnet for writers and intellectuals. At some point, Liu An began working with some of his guest-scholars to produce a book that would synthesize the best points of all schools of thought and provide infallible guidance on how a government should be run. That book is what we now know as the *Huainanzi*.

The fourth Han sovereign, Emperor Jing (r. 157–141 B.C.E.), also was a grandson of the founder and thus was Liu An's cousin. Much of the *Huainanzi* was compiled during Emperor Jing's reign, and it is quite possible that the writing of this manifesto for imperial government reflected Liu An's hope that he might succeed his cousin as emperor. (Unlike later European monarchies, Chinese dynasties did not always pass down the throne to the eldest son of the late ruler; succession could also run from brother to brother, cousin to cousin, and so on.) That did not happen, however. Instead, a teenage son of Emperor Jing, Liu Che, mounted the throne. Known to posterity as Emperor Wu (the Martial Emperor), he reigned from 141 to 87 B.C.E., winning a reputation as the Han dynasty's longest-ruling and most successful emperor.

Having been passed over in the imperial succession, Liu An tried to find another outlet for his ambitions. In 139 B.C.E., he traveled to the Han capital at Chang'an and presented his treatise on good government, the *Huainanzi*, to the imperial throne. He evidently intended to establish himself as a trusted elder cousin (in effect, an honorary uncle) and personal adviser to the young emperor. Records tell us that Emperor Wu was "delighted" with the book, but Liu An himself failed to gain much influence at court. He returned to Huainan and in 122 was accused of harboring imperial ambitions. He committed suicide rather than face prosecution, the kingdom of Huainan was abolished, and Liu An's extensive library and

other personal possessions were confiscated by the throne. Even though Liu An died in disgrace, the *Huainanzi* lived on. It never achieved canonical status (it was not, for example, part of the curriculum of studying for the imperial civil service examinations), but the *Huainanzi* endured through the centuries, attracting the attention of numerous commentators and intellectuals for the inherent interest of its ideas, the beauty of its prose, and its comprehensive approach to understanding the cosmos and the place of humans in it.

The *Huainanzi*

The *Huainanzi* consists of twenty-one chapters. The final chapter, "An Overview of the Essentials," summarizes and characterizes the entire work. Written in an elaborate style of prose-poetry, that chapter probably was recited orally at the imperial court when Liu An presented the book to Emperor Wu. The "Overview" claims that the book's twenty substantive chapters encompass the best features of all earlier thinkers and thus supersede them. Moreover, the chapters leave out nothing of importance and so constitute a complete, unique, and infallible guide to the policies that should be followed by the imperial clan in governing the empire. The book envisions an emperor who has undergone rigorous training in the techniques of self-cultivation, leading to a state of sagehood (that is, being perfectly aligned with the basic forces of the cosmos); who has been comprehensively educated in history, statesmanship, rhetoric, and other necessary qualities; and who rules through loyal ministers and reliable bureaucrats, supported by the Lords of the Land—hereditary aristocrats like Liu An himself. It envisions an imperial establishment that is adaptable to changing times but preserves the best features of the past. Liu An's vision of empire reflected his own position and his own self-interest. In the end, though, that vision was overtaken by the imperial regime's centralizing tendencies and by an imperial ideology that differed significantly from Liu An's intellectual program. Yet some of its basic ideas remained influential, including the notion that the emperor should have the qualities of a sage and that his rule should be so attuned to cosmic forces and cycles as to seem effortless.

Sources and Claims

In the early Han period, Liu An's *Huainanzi* became part of a lively, energetic, sometimes acrimonious multipart conversation among scholars and administrators about the nature of the cosmos, the role of humans in it, the structure and function of government, and other fundamental issues. Some intellectuals of the time took the position that a single text—for example, the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu*) or one of its principal commentaries or the *Changes* (*Yijing* or *Zhouyi*)—constituted a complete and infallible (if properly interpreted) source of all knowledge and wisdom. Others advocated a doctrine (imperfectly understood today and still debated by scholars) known as Huang-Lao that supposedly combined the teachings of Laozi (that is, the *Daodejing*) and the Yellow Emperor. Others, like Liu An, advocated drawing on a diverse menu of texts to formulate a syncretic doctrine. Earlier works of this type, such as the *Mr. Lü's Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Lüshi chunqiu*), directly influenced the *Huainanzi*. In turn, the *Huainanzi* makes the extraordinary claim that it distills and encompasses all essential knowledge, thus rendering all earlier books superfluous and making it unnecessary to compose any more new ones. Not surprisingly, that claim was not widely endorsed by contemporaries. Still, the *Huainanzi* offers a very wide-ranging and informative look at the intellectual currents in the early Han.

Root and Branch

The central organizing metaphor of the *Huainanzi* is the concept of roots and branches—in other words, that certain ideas, concepts, institutions, and texts are fundamental, while others are derivative or peripheral. Put another way, the roots are associated with principles and the Way, and the branches are associated with "affairs," or actualizations of the principles of the Way. The first eight chapters of the work are "root" chapters; the next twelve deal with "branch" issues; and the last summarizes and makes claims for the work as a whole. The root chapters build on one another to create a framework for the branch chapters that follow.

Chapter 1 deals with the Way (*dao*), the indivisible monad that is both the universal source of all things and the all-encompassing totality of everything.

Chapter 2 describes how individual humans can align themselves with the Way to achieve extraordinary states of accomplishment such as the Genuine or the Perfected.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 form a cosmological trilogy of chapters that examine, respectively, astronomy and astrology, geography (both real and mythical) and the interactions of topography and living beings, and the calendar and the appropriate rituals and emblems for every month and season. These three chapters correspond structurally to the familiar triad in early Chinese thought—Heaven, Earth, and Man—in the order in which they emerge from the cosmic root.

Chapter 6 introduces the concept of resonance, the idea that every stimulus evokes a response conveyed through the medium of *qi*. In principle, these stimuli and responses should be comprehensible through an understanding of cosmic regularities, but the chapter admits that in practice many of them remain mysterious.

Chapter 7 covers the theory and techniques of personal self-cultivation, fundamental to success as a ruler (political and administrative techniques of rulership are considered "branch" phenomena).

Chapter 8 articulates a theory of history that sees humans progressing from a "root" state of primitive communitarianism, associated with the Way and its Potency, through successively elaborate forms of culture associated with "branch" virtues such as Humaneness and Rightness, down to the present day when laws and punishments have become necessary for government. The self-cultivated ruler is urged to adhere to the root while making properly expedient use of branch techniques.

Chapters 9 through 20 describe various branch phenomena, including rulership and administration (9), the relationship between government and moral values (10), customs and ritual (11), qualities of the ideal ruler (12), the concept of change in historical context (13), proverbial wisdom (14), the military (15), rhetoric (16 and 17), the vagaries of human affairs (18), the necessity of education and personal effort (19), and Moral Potency as the foundation of government (20). Obviously the classification of these matters as branch phenomena does not imply that they are unimportant, only that they are derived from fundamental principles, rather than being fundamental in their own right.

Key Concepts in the *Huainanzi*

The *Way* (*dao*) is the source of everything in the universe and embraces all things in their totality. Nothing can exist apart from or in contrast to the Way; the Way cannot be negated. Even the term itself is provisional. In fact,

the Way is not namable because to name it would be to differentiate it from something else. (As the opening line of the *Laozi* famously puts it, "The Way that can be called 'The Way' is not the everlasting Way.") According to the *Huainanzi*, the key to success in all human activities is that they be attuned to the Way. The term also can be used to denote a specific doctrine, teaching, or technique (for example, "the Way of charioteering").

Potency (*de*) is the activation of the Way in the phenomenal world. The word *de* is etymologically related to another word (also pronounced *de*) that means "to obtain," so potency has the connotation of "to accumulate." For example, during the spring and summer, the potency of yang accumulates while the potency of yin reciprocally diminishes. But in autumn and winter, yin's potency accumulates while yang's potency diminishes. The sage-ruler accumulates potency, allowing him to bestow rewards on the deserving. Therefore, *de* also has the sense of "reward" or "benefit." When the term occurs in the *Huainanzi* in contexts that are clearly Confucian in orientation (for example, in regard to such virtues as Humaneness and Rightness), we translate it as "Moral Potency." (Older, and in our view less apt, translations of this difficult word include "power" and "virtue.")

Qi means both "matter" and "energy." Everything that exists is made of *qi*, and every action is a manifestation of *qi* energy. *Qi* comes in various textures, from the most ethereal and refined to the coarse and lumpish. Ethereal *qi* is heavenly, and coarse *qi* is earthly. Spirits are made of highly refined *qi*, but ordinary physical matter is made of coarse *qi*. Highly refined states of consciousness such as tranquillity and clarity are manifestations of ethereal *qi*. *Qi* consequently serves as a vibrating, resonant medium that conveys responses to stimuli. In medical and self-cultivation contexts, *qi* means "vital energy" or "vital breath," the animating principle of a living body. The principal aims of various techniques of self-cultivation are to refine the body's *qi*, to attain deep states of insight, and to control and direct the flow of energy within the body.

Wu and *you* are paired antonyms that mean "to be without" and "to have," "nonexistence" and "existence," "nothing" and "something." We live in the world of "something," but "nothing" is both temporally and conceptually prior to "something." *Wu* contains myriad potentialities, but *you* is reduced to a single instantiation. For that reason, the *Huainanzi* (like the Daoist classics the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi*) exhibits a strong preference for *wu* over *you*.

In the *Huainanzi*'s cosmology, the primal unity of the undifferentiated Way divides into *yin* and *yang*, two reciprocal forces that are in a constant state of motion and transformation. Yin and yang are complementary rather than antagonistic. They are paired opposites, each containing the germ of, and ultimately evolving to become, the other. Yin is dark, female, moist, low-lying, cool, oviparous, and winter; and yang correspondingly is bright, male, dry, high, warm, viviparous, and summer. Unlike some other Han texts, the *Huainanzi* does not conspicuously privilege yang over yin but regards both as cosmic forces necessary for the universe to function.

The *Five Phases* (*wuxing*) represent the five paradigmatic manifestations of *qi*: Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal, and Water. (The term *wuxing* is sometimes translated as "five elements," but this is misleading because the five are paradigms, not constituents, of physical phenomena.) The five are "phases" of *qi* in the same sense that steam, liquid water, and ice are "phases" of H_2O. All phenomena can be classified as belonging to one or another of the Five Phases, as well as being yin or yang.

Resonance (*ganying*) refers to the ability of a stimulus to evoke a response through the vibrating medium of *qi*, even in the absence of a perceptible physical connection between the two. The classic example is that if the "C" string of one musical instrument is plucked, the "C" string of a nearby instrument will vibrate. Chapter 6 of the *Huainanzi* describes resonance as being both crucial to the workings of the cosmos and deeply mysterious and hard to fathom.

Nature (*xing*) is the quality that makes a thing itself, the attributes that are present from birth in a living creature. "Nature" is often contrasted with deliberate human undertakings, so it is said that to run and kick is the nature of a horse, while to control a horse with bit and reins is to impose human will on the animal.

Self-cultivation (*yang shen*) refers to a variety of meditative techniques and disciplines aimed at refining and controlling one's store of vital energy to attain a state of authenticity that is a manifestation of "quintessential spirit" (*jingshen*). These are collectively referred to as "the techniques of the mind." The results of successful self-cultivation are described with a variety of terms denoting superior attainments: both the Superior Man (*junzi*) and the Sage (*sheng*) are regarded as active participants in the human realm of affairs, while the Genuine (*zhenren*) and the Perfected (*zhiren*) are mysterious, self-sufficient beings beyond the reach of ordinary

concerns. One consequence of self-cultivation can be the achievement of "spirit-illumination" (or "spiritlike illumination"), an ability to see deeply into matters hidden from the perception of ordinary humans.

Wu wei literally means "without acting." In the *Huainanzi*, it generally does not refer to a state of utter inaction but to the ability of a person (especially a ruler) to be so attuned to the Way and therefore so filled with Potency that his desires are translated into reality without any visible effort on his part. Things that occur through *wu wei* appear to come about "naturally" or "spontaneously" (*ziran* [thus of itself]).

Transformation (*hua*) is the most profound of several terms for change ("change," "alteration," "shift," and so on) in the *Huainanzi*. A sage-ruler is able to "transform the people" by projecting his Potency in such a way as to evoke a spontaneous positive response in the natures of the people in his realm.

Humaneness (*ren*), *Rightness* (*yi*), *Ritual* (*li*), and *Music* (*yue*) are virtues and social phenomena associated especially with the teachings of Confucius and his followers. In the *Huainanzi*, these are taken to be valuable, indeed essential, qualities of a well-governed society in the conditions that obtain in the present day. But they are derived, rather than fundamental, qualities ("branches" rather than "roots"). Thus government conducted by means of these virtues is inferior in principle to the primitive harmony brought about by the sages of antiquity, who, being perfectly attuned to the Way, transformed the people by means of non-action.

Sources of the *Huainanzi*

True to its stated claim to draw on the best ideas of all previous thinkers and texts, the *Huainanzi* quotes, paraphrases, alludes to, and echoes a very wide range of earlier materials. It treats four texts as canonical; that is, it usually quotes them by name and regards them as authoritative in affirming or ratifying a position. These four are the *Laozi*, the *Odes*, the *Changes*, and the *Documents*. The *Huainanzi* also draws heavily on many other texts but seldom or never refers to them by title.

Chapter 1 of the *Huainanzi* is heavily based on the *Laozi*, which therefore can be said to form the root of the work's root chapters. Interestingly, the *Laozi* is not referred to by name in *Huainanzi* 1. Instead, it appears that the authors of the opening chapter of the *Huainanzi* assumed that its readers were thoroughly familiar with its source text. But the *Laozi* is quoted

extensively by name in *Huainanzi* 12 and in many other chapters of the text.

The *Odes* (a collection of some three hundred poems comprising liturgical hymns, dynastic legends, folk songs, and other genres), the *Changes* (a divination text consulted for aid in making decisions), and the *Documents* (a collection of supposedly ancient historical documents of varying degrees of reliability) became closely associated with the Confucian tradition during the Han dynasty. The *Huainanzi* quotes these texts, usually by name, most often in the "branch" chapters of the text and only seldom in the "root" chapters. This is consistent with the *Huainanzi*'s position that the Confucian virtues, like Humaneness, Rightness, Propriety, and Music, are derived properties of the Way.

The *Huainanzi* also draws extensively on the *Zhuangzi* (the second great work, along with the *Laozi*, of pre-Han Daoism), which forms the philosophical basis for *Huainanzi* 2 and 7 and is often alluded to (but not usually cited by name) in other chapters, both "root" and "branch." Several *Huainanzi* chapters allude to the *Hanfeizi* (which argues for hard-nosed political centralism and performance-based rewards and punishments to achieve political goals), the *Xunzi* (a work in the Confucian tradition that advocates a pragmatic approach to political and administrative issues and places great emphasis on the need for education and moral cultivation), and the *Guanzi* (itself a highly eclectic work dealing with government administration, cosmology, self-cultivation, and other matters). The *Huainanzi* also draws on, or at least shares material with, earlier syncretic texts such as the *Shizi* (*Master Shi*) and the *Lüshi chunqiu*.

Individual chapters of the *Huainanzi* can often be associated with particular source texts. *Huainanzi* 3 borrows from astronomical and cosmological texts like the "Tian wen" (Questions About Heaven) section of the poetic anthology *Chuci* (*Elegies of Chu*). *Huainanzi* 4 has much in common with the *Shanhaijing* (*Classic of Mountains and Seas*), an account of real and mythical geography within and beyond the borders of China. Much of *Huainanzi* 5 quotes from (or shares a source text with) the *Lüshi chunqiu*, while *Huainanzi* 15 draws on a rich tradition of pre-Han military texts such as the *Sunzi bingfa* (*Master Sun's Arts of War*). In addition, portions of the *Huainanzi* apparently quote from or are based on earlier texts that have been lost and are now unknown or known only by title. For example, several sections of *Huainanzi* 3 quote verbatim from a short work

known as the “Wuxing zhan” (Stations of the Five Planets), a previously unknown text archaeologically recovered at Mawangdui, Changsha, in Hunan Province, in 1973. Probably many other passages in the *Huainanzi* are quoted from lost and now untraceable sources.

The fact that much of the *Huainanzi* is taken from earlier sources does not mean, however, that the text is simply a grab bag of recycled materials. The genius of Liu An and his court scholars was precisely that, drawing on early China’s rich textual tradition and creating new material as needed, they formulated a comprehensive and persuasive view of the world and how it should be ruled by a sagelike, cultivated, and morally potent sovereign.

About This Book

The Essential Huainanzi is an abridgment of *The Huainanzi: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Government in Early Han China*, the first complete English translation of Liu An’s great work. Although about 20 to 30 percent of each chapter is included in this abridged volume, most of the ancillary features of the unabridged volume, such as the appendices explaining technical terms and an extensive bibliographical essay, have been omitted. Our aim in this book is to create a highly readable condensation of the *Huainanzi* while making it easy to refer to the unabridged work for readers who wish to do so. A few, very inconspicuous corrections to the translation have been made in this abridged volume; otherwise, the corresponding material in the unabridged and abridged texts is identical.

The introduction to each of the chapters of the abridged translation (except that to chapter 21 itself) begins by quoting the chapter summary from *Huainanzi* 21, “An Overview of the Essentials.” After this self-introductory passage, we briefly describe the content of the chapter, its sources, the significance of the chapter title, and the place of the chapter in the work as a whole. Considerably longer and more detailed chapter introductions may be found in the unabridged edition.

*S*ection numbers (not present in the original Chinese text of the *Huainanzi*) were added to the unabridged translation, both to reveal underlying structural features of the text and to facilitate references to the translation itself. The numbers of sections quoted in full or in part in this volume match the section numbers in the unabridged translation.

We were careful to preserve in the formatting of our translations, in both the unabridged edition and this book, such formal characteristics as block

prose, parallel prose (set line for line and indented), and verse (set line for line and indented even more). These features are important to appreciating the literary qualities of the text as well as the rhetorical force of its arguments.

We omitted most of the footnotes in the abridged edition, except for the explanatory footnotes necessary for understanding special terms, historical anecdotes, and the like. Those readers who require such information can find footnotes explaining textual issues, cross-references, and other scholarly questions in the corresponding passages in the unabridged translation.

The proper names of persons, identified in footnotes in the unabridged translation, are collected in a glossary at the end of this volume, to reduce further the distraction of numerous footnotes to the text.

For readers who might wish to consult the Chinese text on which our translation is based, the unabridged translation is keyed by chapter, page, and line to D. C. Lau, *A Concordance to the Huainanzi* (*Huainanzi zhuzi suoyin*) (Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 1992).

We already have defined some of the key terms in the *Huainanzi*, but a fuller explanation of these and other terms may be found in two appendices in the unabridged translation volume: appendix A, "Key Chinese Terms and Their Translations," and appendix B, "Categorical Terms."

In this book's short bibliography, we mention two Chinese editions of the *Huainanzi* and a few key Western-language translations and studies. A more extensive bibliography of translations and studies, along with a brief account of the transmission and textual history of the *Huainanzi*, may be found in the unabridged translation volume, in appendix C, "A Concise Textual History of the *Huainanzi* and a Bibliography of *Huainanzi* Studies."

Further information about the historical background, the intellectual and political life of the early Han dynasty, the sources of the *Huainanzi*, the state of modern *Huainanzi* studies, and other related matters can found in the general introduction to the unabridged translation. Likewise, more detailed information on individual chapters can be found in the chapter introductions of that work.

We gratefully acknowledge the contribution to the complete translation, and to this abridged volume, of two colleagues: Michael Puett, who participated in the translation of chapter 13, and Judson Murray, who participated in the translation of chapter 21.

We hope that this abridged edition of the *Huainanzi* will be read with interest and pleasure and that it will stimulate some readers to explore further in the field of *Huainanzi* studies.

One

ORIGINATING IN THE WAY

"Originating in the Way"
[begins with] the six coordinates contracted and compressed
and the myriad things chaotic and confused.
[It then] diagrams the features of the Grand One
and fathoms the depths of the Dark Unseen,
thereby soaring beyond the frame of Empty Nothingness.
By relying on the small, it embraces the great;
by guarding the contracted, it orders the expansive.
It enables you to understand
the bad or good fortune of taking the lead or following behind
and the benefit or harm of taking action or remaining still.
If you sincerely comprehend its import, floodlike, you can achieve a grand vision.
If you desire a single expression to awaken to it:
"Revere the heavenly and preserve your genuineness."
If you desire a second expression to comprehend it:
"Devalue things and honor your person."
If you desire a third expression to fathom it:
"Externalize desires and return to your genuine dispositions."
If you grasp its main tenets,
inwardly you will harmonize the Five Orbs
and enrich the flesh and skin.
If you adhere to its models and standards
and partake of them to the end of your days,
they will provide the means
to respond and attend to the myriad aspects of the world
and observe and accompany its manifold alterations,
as if rolling a ball in the palm of your hand.
Surely it will suffice to make you joyous!

"An Overview of the Essentials" (21.2)

“Originating in the Way” (Yuan dao), the first of the eight foundational or “root” chapters of the text, is significant because it provides the cosmological basis for the entire *Huainanzi* collection. It opens with a beautiful poetic rhapsody on the cosmology of the Way (*dao*) and its Potency (*de*) in the tradition of the *Laozi*, certainly one of the canonical sources for this essay and for the book as a whole. In it we see a detailed examination of how these cosmic foundations are manifested in the world and an in-depth description of how sages are able to use their unique penetrating vision of these foundations, attained through self-cultivation, to bring peace and harmony to the realm. Coming at the beginning of the entire twenty-one-chapter book and presented to the court at a time when its compiler, Liu An, was trying to dissuade his nephew, Emperor Wu, from accepting the arguments of his Confucian (*ru*) advisers, this chapter serves a number of purposes.

First, even though the chapter never directly affirms a particular intellectual affiliation, its cosmological, psychological, and political philosophy shows its indebtedness to the *Laozi* and some other important early Daoist sources on the relationship of cosmology and self-cultivation to rulership. Only such an ideal of rulership comprehends the inner workings of the cosmos and applies that wisdom to governing in harmony with them. Second, as the opening chapter of the collection, “Originating in the Way” sets out general themes that will be pursued in more detail in much of the remainder of the work, such as cosmology, human psychology and self-cultivation, and political philosophy. Its importance to understanding the entire book and seeing it in a clearer light cannot be overemphasized.

Perhaps the most important focus of this chapter is on how the Way generates and infuses the innate natures of all things and guides their spontaneous interaction through a series of regular patterns such as the movements of the stars and planets and the structured flow of vital energies in the human being. Taken together, these natures and patterns form a “normative natural order.” Sages accord with this order through a self-cultivation process that is described in this chapter. Its authors recommend practices that empty out consciousness to attain psychological states of tranquillity and freedom from self that, when they are applied to daily affairs, produce clear cognition, unbiased attitudes, and effortless action that

yield a spontaneous harmony with the normative natural order. This cognitive mode is the essence of skilled rulership.

One

1.1

As for the Way:
It covers Heaven and upholds Earth.
It extends the four directions
and divides the eight end points.
So high, it cannot be reached.
So deep, it cannot be fathomed.
It embraces and enfolds Heaven and Earth
It endows and bestows the Formless.
Flowing along like a wellspring, bubbling up like a font,
it is empty but gradually becomes full.
Roiling and boiling,
it is murky but gradually becomes clear.
Therefore,
pile it up vertically: it fills all within Heaven and Earth.
Stretch it out horizontally: it encompasses all within the Four Seas.
Unwind it limitlessly: it is without distinction between dawn and dusk.
Roll it out: it expands to the six coordinates.[1]
Roll it up: it does not make a handful.
It is constrained but able to extend.
It is dark but able to brighten.
It is supple but able to strengthen.
It is pliant but able to become firm.
It stretches out the four binding cords and restrains yin and yang.
It suspends the cosmic rafters and displays the Three Luminaries.
Intensely saturating and soaking,
Intensely subtle and minute,
Mountains are high because of it.
Abysses are deep because of it.
Beasts can run because of it.
Birds can fly because of it.
The sun and moon are bright because of it.

The stars and timekeepers move because of it.
Qilins wander freely because of it.
Phoenixes soar because of it.[2]

1.3

The most exalted Way
generates the myriad things but does not possess them,
completes the transforming images but does not dominate them.
Creatures that walk on hooves and breathe through beaks, that fly through the air and wriggle on the ground,
depend on it for life, yet none understands its Potency;
depend on it for death, yet none is able to resent it.
Those who attain it and profit are unable to praise it;
those who use it and lose are unable to blame it.
It gathers and collects yet is not any richer for it.
It bestows and confers yet it not diminished by it.
It cycles endlessly yet cannot be fathomed.
It is delicate and minute yet cannot be exhausted.
Pile it up, but it will not get higher;
Collapse it, but it will not get lower.
Add to it, but it will not increase.
Take away from it, but it will not decrease.
Split it, but it will not get thinner.
Kill it, but it will not be destroyed.
Bore into it, but it will not deepen.
Fill it in, but it will not get shallower.
Hazy! Nebulous! You cannot imagine it.
Nebulous! Hazy! Your use will not exhaust it.
Dark! Obscure! It responds formlessly.
Deep! Penetrating! It does not act in vain.
It rolls and unrolls with the firm and the pliant.
It bends and straightens with the yin and the yang.

1.5

Therefore,
the affairs of the world cannot be deliberately controlled.
You must draw them out by following their natural direction.

The alterations of the myriad things cannot be fathomed.
You must grasp their essential tendencies and guide them to their homes.

When a water mirror comes in contact with shapes, it is not because of wisdom and precedent that it is able to flawlessly reflect the square, round, crooked, and straight. Therefore, the echo does not respond at random, and the shadow does not independently arise. They mimic sounds and forms and tacitly grasp them.

That which is tranquil from our birth is our heavenly nature. Stirring only after being stimulated, our nature is harmed. When things arise and the spirit responds, this is the activity of perception. When perception comes into contact with things, preferences arise. When preferences take shape and perception is enticed by external things, our nature cannot return to the self, and the heavenly patterns are destroyed.

Thus those who break through to the Way do not use the human to change the heavenly. Externally they transform together with things, but internally they do not lose their genuine responses.

They attain Nothing, but their needs are provided for.
They are always on the move but find a place to lodge for the night.

Small and great, tall or short, each has its proper role. The myriads spring forth and leap and prance in profusion, yet they do not lose track of their norms.

So when they rest above, the people do not find them heavy.
When they are located in front, the multitudes do not injure them.
All the world returns to them
The wicked and perverse fear them.

It is because they do not compete with the myriad things that none is able to compete with them.

1.8 (in part)

Therefore,
those who break through to the Way return to clarity and tranquillity.
Those who look deeply into things end up not acting on them.
If you use calmness to nourish your nature,
and use quietude to transfix your spirit,
then you will enter the heavenly gateway.
What we call “Heaven”

is pure and untainted.
Unadorned and plain,
it has never begun to be tainted with impurities.
What we call “human”
is biased because of wisdom and precedent.
Devious and deceptive,
it is what looks back to past generations and interacts with the vulgar.
Thus,
that the ox treads on cloven hooves and grows horns
and that the horse has a mane and square hooves,
This is heavenly [i.e., natural].
Yet to put a bit in a horse’s mouth
and to put a ring through an ox’s nose,
This is human.
Those who comply with Heaven roam with the Way.
Those who follow the human interact with the mundane.
Now,
you cannot talk to a fish in a well about great things because it is confined by its narrow space.
You cannot talk to a summer bug about the cold because it is restricted to its season.
You cannot talk to petty scholars about the Utmost Way because they are confined by the mundane and bound up by their teaching.
Thus sages
do not allow the human to obscure the heavenly
and do not let desire corrupt their genuine responses.
They hit the mark without scheming;
they are sincere without speaking;
they attain without planning;
they complete without striving.
Their vital essence circulates into the Magical Storehouse, and they become human along with what fashions and transforms them.

1.9 (in part)

Therefore,
sages internally cultivate the root [of the Way within them]
and do not externally adorn themselves with its branches.

They protect their Quintessential Spirit
and dispense with wisdom and precedent.
In stillness they take no deliberate action, yet there is nothing left undone.
In tranquillity they do not try to govern, but nothing is left ungoverned.
What we call “no deliberate action” is to not anticipate the activity of things.
What we call “nothing left undone” means to adapt to what things have [already] done.
What we call “to not govern” means to not change how things are naturally so.
What we call “nothing left ungoverned” means to adapt to how things are mutually so.
The myriad things all have a source from which they arise;
[the sages] alone understand how to guard this root.
The hundred endeavors all have a source from which they are produced;
[the sages] alone understand how to guard this gateway.
Thus exhausting the inexhaustible,
reaching the limit of the infinite,
illuminating things without bedazzling them,
and inexhaustibly responding to things like an echo [responds to sound]:
This is what we call “being released by Heaven.”

1.10

Thus those who attain the Way:
Their wills are supple, but their deeds are strong.
Their minds are empty, but their responses are dead on.
What we mean by a supple will is
being pliant and soft, calm, and tranquil;
hiding when others do not dare to;
acting when others are unable to;
being calm and without worry;
acting without missing the right moment;
and cycling and revolving with the myriad things.
Never anticipating or initiating

but just responding to things when stimulated.
Therefore,
the honored invariably take their titles from the base,
and those of high station invariably take what is below as their foundation.
They rely on the small to embrace the great;
they rest in the inner to regulate the outer;
they act pliantly to become firm;
they utilize weakness to become strong;
they cycle through transformations and push where things are shifting;
they attain the Way of the One and use the few to correct the many.
What we mean by strength of deeds is
responding with alacrity when encountering alterations;
pushing away disasters and warding off difficulties;
being so strong that there is nothing unvanquished;
facing enemies, there are none that are not humiliated;
responding to transformations by gauging the proper moment
and being harmed by nothing.
Therefore,
if you wish to be firm, you must guard it by being pliant.
If you wish to be strong, you must protect it by being supple.
When you accumulate pliability, you become firm.
When you accumulate suppleness, you become strong.
Keep a close watch on what you are accumulating
in order to know the tendencies toward fortune or misfortune.
Strength defeats what is not its equal. When it encounters its equal, it is neutralized.
Pliability defeats what exceeds itself. Its power cannot be measured.
Thus when an army is strong, it will be destroyed.
When a tree is strong, it will be broken.
When leather armor is hard, it will split open.
Because teeth are harder than the tongue, they wear out first.
Therefore, the pliant and weak are the supports of life,
and the hard and strong are the disciples of death.

1.12

Of all things under Heaven, none is more pliant and supple than water.

Nonetheless, it is
so great that its limits cannot be reached;
so deep that it cannot be fathomed;
so high that it reaches the infinite;
so distant it merges into the boundless.
Increasing and decreasing, draining away and filling up,
it circulates without restraints into the immeasurable.
When it ascends into the heavens, it becomes the rain and the dew.
When it descends to the earth, it becomes moisture and dampness.
If the myriad things do not gain it, they will not be born.
If the various endeavors do not gain it, they will not succeed.
It completely embraces the various things without partiality or favoritism.
It seeps through to the tiniest of creatures without seeking their gratitude.
Its richness sustains the entire world without being depleted.
Its Potency extends to the hundred clans without being expended.
It circulates [everywhere], yet we cannot exhaust it.
It is so subtle that we cannot seize it in our hands.
Strike it, and it is not wounded.
Pierce it, and it is not injured.
Chop it, and it is not cut apart.
Try to set it alight, and it will not burn.
Seeping, draining, flowing, disappearing,
Mixing and blending, intertwining with [things], it cannot be differentiated.
It is so sharp it can pierce a hole in metal and stone.
It is so strong it can give sustenance to the entire world.
It dissolves into the realm of the Formless,
And soars beyond the region of the Nebulous.
It meanders its way through the rivers and valleys,
and surges out into the vast wildernesses.
Depending on whether it is abundant or deficient,
it takes from or gives to Heaven and Earth.
It gives to the myriad things equally without preferences.
Therefore,

without being partial or impartial, gushing and undulating, it totally merges with Heaven and Earth.
Without favoring the left or the right, coiling and swirling, it ends and begins with the myriad things.

This is what we call “Perfect Potency.”

The reason that water is able to achieve its Perfect Potency within the entire world is that it is gentle and soaking, moist and slippery. Thus, in the words of Lao Dan:

The most pliant things in the world
ride roughshod over the most rigid.
[This is because] they emerge from the Nonexistent
and enter into the Seamless.

I thereby understand the benefits of taking no action.

Now the Formless is the Great Ancestor of things,
and the Toneless is the Great Ancestor of sound.
Their son is light;
their grandson is water;

And both are generated by the Formless.

Light can be seen but cannot be held;
water can be held but cannot be destroyed.

Thus of all things that have shapes, none is more honored than water.

1.14

Joy and anger are aberrations from the Way;
worry and grief are losses of Potency.
Likes and dislikes are excesses of the mind;
lusts and desires are hindrances to nature.
Violent anger ruins the yin;
extreme joy collapses the yang.
The suppression of vital energy brings on dumbness;
fear and terror bring on madness.
When you are worried, aggrieved, or enraged,
sickness will increasingly develop.
When likes and dislikes abundantly pile up,
misfortunes will successively follow.

Thus,

when the mind is not worried or happy, it achieves the perfection of Potency.
When the mind is inalterably expansive, it achieves the perfection of tranquillity.
When lusts and desires do not burden the mind, it achieves the perfection of emptiness.
When the mind is without likes and dislikes, it achieves the perfection of equanimity.
When the mind is not tangled up in things, it achieves the perfection of purity.

If the mind is able to achieve these five qualities, then it will break through to spiritlike illumination. To break through to spiritlike illumination is to realize what is intrinsic.

Therefore,
if you use the internal to govern the external,
then your various endeavors will not fail.
If you are able to realize internally,
then the external can be attended to.
If you realize it internally
then your Five Orbs[3] will be in repose;
worries and anxieties will be at peace.
Your sinews will be powerful, and your muscles will be strong;
your ears and eyes will be acute and clear.
Though you are placid and calm, you do not waver.
Though you are hard and strong, you do not break.
There is nothing you overshoot
and nothing you fall short of.
When you dwell in the small, you will not be cramped;
when you dwell in the great, you will be unrestrained.
Your soul will not be agitated;
your spirit will not be troubled.
Clear and limpid, still and calm,
you will become a hero to the entire world.

1.17

The mind is the master of the Five Orbs. It regulates and directs the Four Limbs and circulates the blood and vital energy, gallops through the realms

of accepting and rejecting, and enters and exits through the gateways and doorways of the hundreds of endeavors. Therefore if you do not realize it [your intrinsic nature] in your own mind and still want to control the entire world, this is like having no ears yet wanting to tune bells and drums and like having no eyes and wanting to enjoy patterns and ornaments. You will, most certainly, not be up to the task.

Thus the world is a spiritlike vessel: you cannot act deliberately on it; you cannot control it. Those who attempt to deliberately act on it will be defeated by it; those who try to control it will lose it. Now the reason that Xu You devalued the world and would not trade places with Yao was because he had the intention of leaving the world behind. Why was this so? Because he thought that you should act on the world by adapting to it [and not trying to force your own will on it].

The essentials of the world:

do not lie in the Other
but instead lie in the self;
do not lie in other people
but instead lie in your own person.

When you fully realize it [the Way] in your own person, then all the myriad things will be arrayed before you. When you thoroughly penetrate the teachings of the techniques of the mind, then you will be able to put lusts and desires, likes and dislikes, outside yourself.

Therefore [if you realize the Way],
there is nothing to rejoice in and nothing to be angry about,
nothing to be happy about and nothing to feel bitter about.
You will be mysteriously unified with the myriad things,
and there is nothing you reject and nothing you affirm.
You transform and nourish a mysterious resplendence
and, while alive, seem to be dead.

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1. That is, the three dimensions: up-down, front-back, and left-right.

2. The *qilin* was a mythical animal with the head of a lion or dragon, horns, the body of a horse, and hooves like those of a goat or deer. The phoenix (*fenghuang*) was a mythical bird somewhat resembling a peacock or a pheasant. Both were said to appear only during times of good government.

3. The Five Orbs correspond to the five organs of the human physiology. They were thought to be important generative and coordinating junctures for the dynamic matrix of *qi* that composed the mind–body system: the lungs, liver, spleen, gall bladder, and kidneys. The term refers to organic

systems, not just to the physical viscera; hence we speak of the pulmonary, hepatic, choleric, splenic, and renal orbs.

Two

ACTIVATING THE GENUINE

"Activating the Genuine" exhaustively traces the transformation [of things] from their ends to their beginnings;
infuses and fills the essence of Something and Nothing;
distinguishes and differentiates the alterations of the myriad things;
unifies and equates the forms of death and life.
It enables you to
know to disregard things and return to the self;
investigate the distinctions between Humaneness and Rightness;
comprehend the patterns of identity and difference;
observe the guiding thread of Utmost Potency;
and know the binding cords of alterations and transformations.
Its explanations tally with the core of the Profound Mystery
and comprehend the mother of creation and transformation.

"An Overview of the Essentials" (21.2)

"Activating the Genuine" is the second of the eight "root" or foundational chapters of the text and serves as a companion to chapter 1, "Originating in the Way," in its overarching cosmology and self-cultivation themes. Whereas "Originating in the Way" is very much indebted to the *Laozi*, "Activating the Genuine" is thoroughly steeped in the *Zhuangzi*, three of whose authorial voices are powerfully represented in its pages.[1]

All the principal themes of chapter 2 are found in the *Zhuangzi*. These include cosmogony, the precariousness of life, the existence of archaic utopias governed by spiritually perfected sage-rulers, the devolution of history and the degradation of spiritual realization that have occurred over time, the nature of perfected human beings, the Way as the source of the entire universe, the spiritual perfection of sages who through meditative "inner cultivation" return to the wellsprings of the spirit that lie deep within human nature, and the importance of the right balance of nature and destiny in the human ability to attain sagerulership and spiritual fulfillment.

The authors of chapter 2 hark back to the Utopian past of "great perfection," in which the people lived in simplicity and harmony with one another and with all creatures. They were led by Genuine human beings, now rare but still present, who, expert in the "techniques of the Way," embraced Potency and lived in accord with the foundations of the cosmos. Deeply grounded in an internal experience of all aspects of the transcendent Way, these Perfected persons bring a dispassionate clarity to ruling the people and influence them toward tranquillity and harmony simply by their presence. Yet these Genuine human beings are not fundamentally different from other people: they share a natural tendency for the senses to perceive clearly and to be naturally tranquil but easily disturbed by lusts and desires. These sages differ from others, however, in how they use the meditational "techniques of the mind" in order to keep their spirits clear, their minds empty of desires and preferences, and their consciousness illumined and impartial. They thus allow their own natures to engender spontaneous and genuine responses to things and so to cultivate the internal and use it to rule the external. The authors of chapter 2 criticize the current-day disciples of Confucius and Mozi for failing to do this, observing that their Way is external and derived from the branches rather than from these internal psychospiritual roots. As the authors say, when what is external does not disturb what is internal, then nature can function spontaneously and harmoniously and will achieve Potency. Thus the genuine responses of our innate natures to the many life situations that constitute our destiny are completely facilitated and the Way is fully embodied. This is the foundation of enlightened rulership.

Two

2.2 (in part)

The Great Clod[2]

loads me with a body,
burdens me with a life,
eases me with old age,
rests me with death.

That I found it good to live is the very reason why I find it good to die.

[You can] hide a boat in a ravine,
hide a fishing net in a marsh:

people call this "secure."

However, in the middle of the night, a strong man can put [the boat] on his back and run off with it, and the sleeper does not know about it. It is appropriate to hide small things within the large. But if you do so, your thing just might vanish from you. But if you hide the world in the world, then there is nothing that can conceal its form.

How can it be said that things are not grandly indiscriminate? You once happen on the shape of a human being and are especially pleased. But humanity has a thousand alterations and ten thousand transformations, never reaching its limit, wearing out and then renewing; should not your joy be incalculable? Compare it to a dream:

In a dream we become a bird and fly into the sky.
In a dream we become a fish and disappear into the deep.

When we are dreaming, we do not know it is a dream; only after we awaken do we realize it is a dream. Only when we have a great awakening do we realize that this present moment is the ultimate dream. In the beginning before I was born, how could I have known the joy of being alive? Now in this moment when I have not yet died, how can I know that death is not also joyful?

In ancient times, Gongniu Ai suffered from a cyclical illness: every seven days he would transform into a tiger. His older brother opened his door and

entered to spy on him, and when he did, the tiger snatched and killed him. Thus,

his [outer] patterns and markings became those of a beast;
his fingernails and teeth shifted and changed;
his consciousness and mind altered;
his spirit and form transformed.

When he was a tiger, he did not know that he had ever been a human being. When he was a human being, he knew nothing about being a tiger. These two alternated in opposition, yet each found joy in the form it took. Cleverness and confusion displace [each other] endlessly, and who knows from what they spring?

When water approaches winter, it congeals and becomes ice.
When ice welcomes spring, it melts and becomes water.

Ice and water shift and change in the former and latter positions as if they were running around in an eternal circle; which has the time to know bitterness or joy?

2.3

Among the people of antiquity were some who situated themselves in the chaotic and obscure. Their spirit and vital energy did not leak out to their exteriors. The myriad things were peaceful and dispassionate and so became contented and tranquil. The *qi* of [baleful comets such as] "magnolias," "lances," "colliders," and "handles" was in every case blocked and dissipated so that they were unable to cause harm. At that time, the myriad peoples were wild and untamed, not knowing East from West;

they roamed with their mouths full,
drummed on their bellies in contentment.
In copulation they followed the harmony of Heaven;
in eating they accorded with the Potency of Earth.

They did not use minute precedent or "right and wrong" to surpass one another. Vast and boundless, this is what we call "Grand Order." And so those in high station

directed [ministers] on their left and right and did not pervert their natures;
possessed and pacified [the people] and did not compromise their Potency.

Thus,

Humaneness and Rightness were not proclaimed, and the myriad things flourished.

Rewards and punishments were not deployed, and all in the world were respected.

Their Way could give rise to great perfection, but it is difficult to find a quantitative measure for it. Thus,

calculating by days there is not enough;

calculating by years there is surplus.

Fish forget themselves in rivers and lakes.

Humans forget themselves in the techniques of the Way.

The Genuine of antiquity stood in the foundation of Heaven and Earth, were centered in uninterrupted roaming, embraced Potency, and rested in harmony. The myriad things were to them like smoke piling higher. Which of them would willingly create discord in human affairs or use things to trouble their nature and destiny?

2.4

The Way has both a warp and a weft linked together. [The Perfected] attain the unity of the Way and join with its thousand branches and ten thousand leaves.

Thus

because they have it in high position, they can promulgate their decrees;

because they have it in low position, they can forget their baseness;

because they have it in poverty, they can take pleasure in their work;

because they have it in distress, they can be settled amid danger.

When the great cold arrives, frost and snow descend: only then do we understand the vigor of pine and cypress;

Withstanding difficulties, walking into danger, with profit and harm arrayed before them: only then do we understand how sages do not lose the Way.

Thus those who are able to

wear on their heads the Great Circle [of Heaven] will traverse the Great Square [of Earth];

mirror Vast Purity will contemplate Great Luminosity;

stand amid Vast Peace will be situated in the great hall;

roam amid Dark Obscurity will have the same brilliance as the sun and moon.

Thus,

they take the Way as their pole;
Potency as their line;
Rites and Music as their hook;
Humaneness and Rightness as their bait;
they throw them into the rivers;
they float them into the seas.

Though the myriad things are boundless in numbers, which of them will they not possess?

2.6

To grasp the intensely bright and not blacken it,
act with the perfectly pure and not sully it,
rest in profound obscurity and not darken it,
sit at the pivot of Heaven and not destroy it,
to be unobstructed by the Mengmen or Zhonglong mountains,
unhindered by swift currents, deep chasms, or the depths of Luliang,
unimpeded by the obstructions of Taihang, Shijian, Feihu, or Gouwang.
Only those who embody the Way are able to not be defeated [by these things].

For these reasons, their persons reside on rivers and seas, and their spirits roam under the palace gateway. Had they not attained the One Source, how could they have reached this point?

For these reasons, residing with the Perfected
makes families forget their poverty,
makes kings and dukes scorn honors and riches

and delight in poverty and baseness,

makes the brave deflate their anger
and makes the greedy diminish their desires.
They sit and do not teach;
they stand and do not dispute.
When they are empty, they go;
when they are full, they return.

Thus they do not speak and can quench others with harmony.

For these reasons, [those who embody] the Utmost Way take no action.

Now a dragon, then a snake,
they expand and contract,
coil and uncoil,
and alter and transform with the seasons.
Outside, they follow prevailing customs;
inside, they guard their nature.
Their ears and eyes are not dazzled.
Their thoughts and reflections are not entangled.

Those who in this way lodge their spirit maintain the simple in order to roam in vast purity, draw into compliance the myriad things, and cause the many excellences to germinate.

For these reasons,
the spirit will depart from those who belabor their spirit;
the spirit will lodge with those who rest their spirit.

The Way emerges from the One Source, penetrates the Nine Gateways, is scattered through the Six Crossroads, and is displayed in the domain of the boundless. It is still and silent and thereby empty and nonexistent. It is not that it acts on things; it is that things act on themselves. For these reasons, when affairs comply with the Way, it is not that the Way has accomplished them but that the Way has impelled them.

2.11

The nature of water is clear, yet soil sullies it.
The nature of humans is tranquil, yet desires disorder it.

What human beings receive from Heaven are [the tendencies]

for ears and eyes [to perceive] colors and sounds,
for mouth and nose [to perceive] fragrances and tastes,
for flesh and skin [to perceive] cold and heat.

The instinctive responses are the same in everyone, but some penetrate to spiritlike illumination, and some cannot avoid derangement and madness. Why is this? That by which they [these tendencies] are controlled is different.

Thus,
the spirit is the source of consciousness. If the spirit is clear, then consciousness is illumined.

Consciousness is the storehouse of the mind. If consciousness is impartial, then the mind is balanced.

No one can mirror himself in flowing water, but [he can] observe his reflection in standing water because it is still.

No one can view his form in raw iron, but [he can] view his form in a clear mirror because it is even.

Only what is even and still can thus give form to the nature and basic tendencies of things. Viewed from this perspective, usefulness depends on what is not used. Thus when the empty room is pristine and clear, good fortune will abide there.

If the mirror is bright, dust and dirt cannot obscure it.

If the spirit is clear, lusts and desires cannot disorder it.

To work at reclaiming the Quintessential Spirit once it has already overflowed externally is to lose the root and seek it in the branches. If external and internal do not tally and you desire to interact with things; if you cover your mysterious light and seek to know [things] with the ears and eyes; this is to discard your brilliance and follow your blindness. This is called “losing the Way.” When the mind goes somewhere, the spirit swiftly lodges there. By returning the spirit to emptiness, this lodging dissolves and is extinguished. This is the wandering of the sage.

Thus those in antiquity who ordered the world invariably penetrated the basic tendencies of nature and destiny. Their taking and giving were not necessarily the same, [but] they were as one in uniting with the Way.

You do not refrain from wearing fur in summer because you cherish it but because it is too hot for your person.

You do not refrain from using a fan in winter to conserve it but because it is too cold for comfort.

The sages

assess their bellies and eat;

measure their frames and dress.

They compose themselves, that is all; from whence can the mind of greed and dissipation arise?

Thus,

a person who can have the world is invariably someone who will not strive for it.

A person who can possess fame and praise is invariably someone who will not scurry in search of them.

The sage has broken through to it. Having broken through to it, the mind of lust and desire is external [to him].

2.12

The disciples of Confucius and Mozi all teach the techniques of Humaneness and Rightness to the age, yet they do not avoid destruction. If they personally cannot practice [their teachings], how much less may those they teach? Why is this? Because their Way is external. To ask the branches to return to the roots: if even Xu You could not do it, how much less the common people? If you genuinely break through to the basic tendencies of nature and destiny, so that Humaneness and Rightness adhere [to your actions], how then can choosing and discarding suffice to confuse your mind?

If
the spirit has no obstruction and the mind has no burden,
if they are pervasively comprehending and minutely penetrating,
calm and quiescent and free of tasks,
without any congealing or stagnancy,
attentive in empty stillness,
then
power and profit cannot lure them;
logicians cannot delight them;
sounds and colors cannot corrupt them;
beauty cannot debauch them;
wisdom cannot move them;
courage cannot frighten them;
This is the Way of the Genuine. Those who are like this shape and forge the myriad things and in their being human are conjoined with what creates and transforms.

Amid Heaven and Earth,
in space and time,
nothing can destroy or impede them.
What generates life is not life;
what transforms things is not transformation.
Their spirits:
cross Mount Li or the Taihang [Mountains] and have no difficulty;
enter the Four Seas or the Nine Rivers and cannot be trapped;

lodge in narrow defiles and cannot be obstructed;
spread across the realm of Heaven and Earth and are not stretched.
If you do not penetrate to this [point],
though your eyes enumerate a group of one thousand sheep,
though your ears distinguish the tones of the eight winds,
your feet perform the "Northern Bank" dance;
your hands execute the "Green Waters" rhythm;
your intelligence encompasses Heaven and Earth;
your brilliance illuminates the sun and moon;
your disputations unknot linked jewels;
your words add luster to jade and stone;
These will still be of no aid to governing the world.

2.13

Tranquillity and calmness are that by which the nature is nourished.
Harmony and vacuity are that by which Potency is nurtured.
When what is external does not disturb what is internal, then our nature attains what is suitable to it.
When the harmony of nature is not disturbed, then Potency will rest securely in its position.
Nurturing life so as to order the age,
embracing Potency so as to complete our years,
This may be called being able to embody the Way.
Those who are like this:
Their blood and pulse have no sluggishness or stagnation;
their five orbs have no diseased *qi;*
calamity and good fortune cannot perturb them;
blame and praise cannot settle on them like dust;
thus can they reach the ultimate. [However,] if you do not have the age, how can you succeed? If you have the right character but do not meet your time, you will not even be able to safeguard your person. How much less so one who is without the Way!
Moreover, the instinctive responses of human beings are for
the ears and eyes to respond to stimulus and movement,
the mind and awareness to recognize worry and happiness.
The hands and feet to rub at pains and itches and to avoid cold and heat.

This is how we interact with things.

> If a wasp or a scorpion stings your finger, your spirit cannot remain placid.
>
> If a mosquito or a gadfly bites your flesh, your nature cannot remain settled.

The worries and calamities that come to disturb your mind are not limited to the poisonous bites of wasps or scorpions or the annoyance of mosquitoes and gadflies, yet you want to remain tranquil and vacuous. How can it be done?

> The ears of one whose eyes are examining the tip of an autumn hair will not hear the sound of thunder and lightning.
>
> The eyes of one whose ears are harmonizing the tones of jade and stone will not see the form of Mount Tai.

Why is this? They are attending to what is small and forgetting what is big. Now the arrival of the myriad things, pulling and plucking at my nature, grabbing and grasping at my feelings, is like a spring or fountain, even if one wanted to not be ruled [by them], could this be achieved?

Now a person who plants a tree irrigates it with springwater and beds it in fertile soil. If one person nurtures it and ten people harvest it, there will certainly be no spare splinters; how much less if the entire kingdom hacks at it together? Though one wanted it to live for a long time, how could this be accomplished?

If you leave a basin of water in the courtyard to settle for one full day, you will still not be able to see your eyebrows and lashes. If you muddy it with no more than one stir, you will not be able to distinguish square from circular. The human spirit is easy to muddy and difficult to clarify, much like the basin of water. How much more so when an entire age stirs and disturbs it; how can it attain a moment of equanimity?

1.These three voices are the authentic writings of Zhuang Zhou, the "Primitivist," and the "Syncretist." The *Zhuangzi* is a layered text, written by several hands over a period of time, and some of its latest portions might be roughly contemporaneous with the *Huainanzi*.

2. "The Great Clod" is a slightly ironic Daoist term for the physical world.

Three

CELESTIAL PATTERNS

"Celestial Patterns" provides the means by which to
harmonize the *qi* of yin and yang,
order the radiances of the sun and moon,
regulate the seasons of opening [spring/summer] and closing [fall/winter],
tabulate the movements of the stars and planets,
know the permutations of [their] retrograde and proper motion,
avoid the misfortunes associated with prohibitions and taboos,
follow the responses of the seasonal cycles,
and imitate the constancy of the Five Gods.
It enables you to
possess the means to gaze upward to Heaven and uphold what to follow
and thereby avoid disordering Heaven's regularities.

"An Overview of the Essentials" (21.2)

The term *tian wen* (celestial patterns) means "astronomy" in modern Chinese, but the classical term has a much broader reach, encompassing also astrology, cosmology, calendrics, mathematical harmonics, and meteorology. Although some passages in *Huainanzi* 3 may strike modern readers as both obscure and highly technical, from the point of view of Han intellectual history, this chapter treats its topics in rather general terms, omitting the sorts of technical detail that would be the province of specialists. Although the chapter is not a manual for practicing astrologers, attentive readers would learn enough to be able to participate in a discussion in which these topics arose (such as a court debate about astrologically based policy).

This chapter draws on, and is generally consistent with, a substantial body of pre-Han and Han astronomical and astrological lore. Some of its source texts still exist, notably a poetical catechism called "Questions about Heaven," which is included in an ancient anthology of poetry, the *Chuci*

(*Elegies of Chu*). In fact, portions of 3.1, 3.4, 3.13–3.16, and 3.25 give direct answers to that text's questions. Other sections of the chapter appear to be "set pieces" quoted from writings that are no longer extant, so whose existence can only be inferred. Lending strength to that inference is section 3.6, quoted from a text that was unknown until a manuscript copy was recovered archaeologically from a tomb at Mawangdui (near Changsha, Hunan Province) in 1973.

The principal message of this chapter is that all things in the cosmos are interconnected and that human plans and intentions are subject to the influence of various cosmic cycles and correlations. Section 3.2, for example, discusses the influence of yin and yang on the behavior and transformations of various creatures. Section 3.6 gives correlates for each of the five naked-eye planets. Section 3.28 (as well as sections 3.29–3.31, which are not included here) demonstrates the numerological links between weights and measures and the musical notes of the five-tone and twelve-tone scales. Other passages, not included in this abridged version, give correlates for the eight winds (3.12), the interactions of yin and yang with the twelve lunar months (3.16), the twenty-four fifteen-day periods of the solar year (3.18), and the twelve-year orbital cycle of the planet Jupiter (3.33), among many other topics. The reader will learn from these passages that such cycles and correlations must be understood and taken into account in the formulation of policy.

Three

3.1

When Heaven and Earth were yet unformed, all was
ascending and flying,
diving and delving.
Thus it was called the Grand Inception.
The Grand Inception produced the Nebulous Void.
The Nebulous Void produced space-time;
space-time produced the original *qi*.
A boundary [divided] the original *qi*.
That which was pure and bright spread out to form Heaven;
that which was heavy and turbid congealed to form Earth.
It is easy for that which is pure and subtle to converge
but difficult for the heavy and turbid to congeal.
Therefore
Heaven was completed first;
Earth was fixed afterward.
The conjoined essences of Heaven and Earth produced yin and yang.
The supersessive essences of yin and yang caused the four seasons.
The scattered essences of the four seasons created the myriad things.
The hot *qi* of accumulated yang produced fire; the essence of fiery *qi* became the sun.
The cold *qi* of accumulated yin produced water; the essence of watery *qi* became the moon.
The overflowing *qi* of the essences of the sun and the moon made the stars and planets.
To Heaven belong the sun, moon, stars, and planets;
to Earth belong waters and floods, dust and soil.

In ancient times Gong Gong and Zhuan Xu fought, each seeking to become the thearch.[1] Enraged, they crashed against Mount Buzhou;[2]
Heaven's pillars broke;
the cords of Earth snapped.

Heaven tilted in the northwest, and thus the sun and moon, stars and planets shifted in that direction.

Earth became unfull in the southeast, and thus the watery floods and mounding soils subsided in that direction.

3.2

The Way of Heaven is called the Round;
the Way of Earth is called the Square.
The square governs the obscure;
the circular governs the bright.
The bright emits *qi*, and for this reason fire is the external brilliance of the sun.
The obscure sucks in *qi*, and for this reason water is the internal luminosity of the moon.
Emitted *qi* endows;
retained *qi* transforms.
Thus yang endows and yin transforms.
The unbalanced *qi* of Heaven and Earth, becoming perturbed, causes wind;
the harmonious *qi* of Heaven and Earth, becoming calm, causes rain.
When yin and yang rub against each other, their interaction produces thunder.
Aroused, they produce thunderclaps;
disordered, they produce mist.
When the yang *qi* prevails, it scatters to make rain and dew;
when the yin *qi* prevails, it freezes to make frost and snow.
Hairy and feathered creatures make up the class of flying and walking things and are subject to yang.
Creatures with scales and shells make up the class of creeping and hiding things and are subject to yin.
The sun is the ruler of yang. Therefore, in spring and summer animals shed their fur; at the summer solstice, stags' antlers drop off.
The moon is the fundament of yin. Therefore when the moon wanes, the brains of fish shrink; when the moon dies, wasps and crabs shrivel up.
Fire flies upward;
water flows downward.

Thus,

the flight of birds is aloft;
the movement of fishes is downward.
Things within the same class mutually move one another;
root and twig mutually respond to each other.

Therefore,

when the burning mirror sees the sun, it ignites tinder and produces fire.
When the square receptacle sees the moon, it moistens and produces water.
When the tiger roars, the valley winds rush;
when the dragon arises, the bright clouds accumulate.
When *qilins* wrangle, the sun or moon is eclipsed;
when the leviathan dies, comets appear.
When silkworms secrete fragmented silk, the *shang* string [of a stringed instrument] snaps.
When meteors fall, the Bohai[3] surges upward.

3.3

The feelings of the rulers of men penetrate to Heaven on high.

Thus,

if there are punishments and cruelty, there will be whirlwinds.
If there are wrongful ordinances, there will be plagues of devouring insects.
If there are unjust executions, the land will redden with drought.
If there are unseasonable ordinances, there will be great excess of rain.
The four seasons are the officers of Heaven.
The sun and moon are the agents of Heaven.
The stars and planets mark the appointed times of Heaven.
Rainbows and comets are the portents of Heaven.

3.6

What are the five planets?

The East is Wood. Its god is Tai Hao. His assistant is Gou Mang. He grasps the compass and governs spring. His spirit is Year Star [Jupiter]. His animal is the Bluegreen Dragon. His musical note is *jue;* his days are *jia* and *yi.*

The South is Fire. Its god is Yan Di. His assistant is Zhu Ming. He grasps the balance beam and governs summer. His spirit is Sparkling Deluder [Mars]. His animal is the Vermilion Bird. His musical note is *zhi;* his days are *bing* and *ding.*

The Center is Earth. Its god is the Yellow Emperor. His assistant is Hou Tu ["Sovereign of the Soil"]. He grasps the marking cord and governs the four quarters. His spirit is Quelling Star [Saturn]. His animal is the Yellow Dragon. His musical note is *gong;* his days are *wu* and *ji.*

The West is Metal. Its god is Shao Hao. His assistant is Ru Shou. He grasps the T-square and governs autumn. His spirit is Great White [Venus]. His animal is the White Tiger. His musical note is *shang*; his days are *geng* and *xin*.

The North is Water. Its god is Zhuan Xu. His assistant is Xuan Ming. He grasps the weight and governs winter. His spirit is Chronograph Star [Mercury]. His animal is the Dark Warrior. His musical note is *yu*; his days are *ren* and *gui*.

3.24

In the third [and final] month of spring, abundant thunder sounds forth, bringing in the rains.

In the third [and final] month of autumn, the *qi* of Earth has not yet become [completely] quiescent, and one gathers in the killed things. All crawling things become torpid and hide away, and country dwellers shut their gates. Gray Woman comes out and brings down frost and snow.

Thus the *qi* of the twelve times of the year progress until they reach an end [again] in the second month of spring, when what has been stored away is received forth [again] and the cold is shut away. Then Tranquil Woman drums and sings to regulate the harmony of Heaven and to make grow the hundred kinds of cereals, the beasts and birds, and the herbs and trees.

In the first month of summer the crops ripen; the cries of pheasants and pigeons become prolonged, causing the emperor to look forward to the annual harvest.

Thus,

> if Heaven does not give forth yin, the myriad things cannot be born;
> if Earth does not give forth yang, the myriad things cannot grow to maturity.
> Heaven is round;

Earth is square;
the Way is exactly in the middle.
The sun [produces] accretion;
the moon [produces] paring away.
When the moon reverts [in its course], the myriad creatures die.
When the sun attains its apogee, the myriad creatures are born.
Separated from mountains, the *qi* of mountains is hidden away.
Separated from water, aquatic insects become dormant.
Separated from trees, leaves wither.

When the sun is not seen for five days, [the ruler] will lose his throne. Even a [ruler who is a] sage cannot withstand this.

3.25

The sun rises up from the Bright Valley, bathes in the Pool of Xian, and rests in the Fusang Tree.[4] This is called Dawn Light.

Ascending the Fusang Tree, it thereupon commences its journey. This is called Emergent Brightness.

[When the sun] reaches the Bent Slope, this is called Dawn Brilliance.
[When the sun] reaches the Steaming Spring, this is called the Morning Meal.
[When the sun] reaches the Mulberry Field, this is called the Late-Morning Meal.
[When the sun] reaches the Balance Beam of Yang, this is called Within the Angle.
[When the sun] reaches Kun Wu, this is called the Exact Center.
[When the sun] reaches the Bird Roost, this is called the Lesser Return.
[When the sun] reaches the Valley of Grief, this is called the Dinner Hour.
[When the sun] reaches Woman's Sequence, this is called the Great Return.
[When the sun] reaches the Angle of the Abyss, this is called the Raised Pestle.
[When the sun] reaches Carriage Stone, this is called the Descending Pestle.

[When the sun] reaches the Fountain of Grief, it halts; its female attendant rests her horses. This is called the Suspended Chariot.

[When the sun] reaches the Abyss of Anxiety, this is called Yellow Dusk.

[When the sun] reaches the Vale of Obscurity, this is called Definite Dusk.

The sun enters the floodwaters of the Abyss of Anxiety; sunrise emerges from the drainage stream of the Vale of Obscurity. [The sun] travels over the nine continents, [passing through] seven resting places, [covering a distance of] 507,309 *li*. The divisions [of its journey] make dawn, daylight, dusk, and night.

3.28

Thus it is said, "The Way begins with one." One [alone], however, does not give birth. Therefore it divided into yin and yang. From the harmonious union of yin and yang, the myriad things were produced. Thus it is said,

"One produced two,
two produced three,
three produced the myriad things."

[With regard to] Heaven and Earth, three months make one season. Thus a sacrifice of three [types or portions of] cooked grains are used in mourning rites. The year continues for three shifts [of seasons] to make the seasonal nodes [complete their cycle]. Armies emphasize three signal flags in order to maintain control.

Using three to examine matters: $3 \times 3 = 9$. Thus the Yellow Bell pitch pipe is nine inches long and harmonizes with the note *gong*. Furthermore, $9 \times 9 = 81$. Thus the number of the Yellow Bell is established therein. Yellow is the color of the Potency of Earth; the bell is that by which the [seeds of] *qi* are sown. At the winter solstice the *qi* of accretion produces Earth; the color of Earth is yellow. Thus the [note of the winter solstice] is called Yellow Bell.

The number of pitch pipes is six, classified as female and male [for a total of twelve]. Thus it is said there are twelve bells to act as adjuncts to the twelve months. Each of the twelve is based on three. Thus if one sets up [the number] one and triples it eleven times [i.e., 3^{11}], the total is 177,147. The Great Number of the Yellow Bell is thereby revealed.

3.41

Of those prized by the heavenly spirits, none is more prized than the Bluegreen Dragon. The Bluegreen Dragon is otherwise called the Heavenly Unity, or otherwise *taiyin*. [The country corresponding to] the place where *taiyin* dwells cannot retreat but can advance. [The country corresponding to] the place beaten against by the Northern Dipper cannot withstand attack. When Heaven and Earth were founded, they divided to make yin and yang.

Yang is born from yin;
yin is born from yang;

they are in a state of mutual alternation. The four binding cords [of Heaven] communicate with them.

Sometimes there is death;
sometimes there is birth.

Thus are the myriad things brought to completion.

[Of all creatures that] move and breathe, none is more prized than humans.

[The bodily] orifices, limbs, and trunk all communicate with Heaven.

Heaven has nine layers; man also has nine orifices.
Heaven has four seasons, to regulate the twelve months;
Man also has four limbs, to control the twelve joints.
Heaven has twelve months, to regulate the 360 days;
Man also has twelve joints, to regulate the 360 nodes.

A person who undertakes affairs while not obeying Heaven is someone who deviates from what gave birth to him.

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1. “Thearch” is our translation of the Chinese word *di*. Its connotations of divine rulership emphasize the transcendent qualities of a sage-emperor (whether mythical or real) empowered by the Way.
2. Mount Buzhou was a mythical mountain northwest of China, considered to be the pivot point of the cosmos.
3. The Bohai is a shallow body of water forming China’s northeastern coast, bounded by the Liaodong and Shandong peninsulas.
4. All the places mentioned in this passage are mythical or astral, not actual geographical locations. The Fusang Tree was a magical mulberry tree on which the sun-crow perched before beginning its daily trip across the sky.

Four

TERRESTRIAL FORMS

"Terrestrial Forms" provides the means by which to
encompass the length from north to south,
reach the breadth from east to west,
survey the topography of the mountains and hillocks,
demarcate the locations of the rivers and valleys,
illuminate the master of the myriad things,
know the multitude of categories of living things,
tabulate the enumerations of mountains and chasms,
and chart the roadways far and near.
It enables you to
circulate comprehensively and prepare exhaustively,
so that you cannot be roused by things
or startled by oddities.

"An Overview of the Essentials" (21.2)

"Terrestrial Forms" is an account of world geography from the point of view of the Western Han dynasty. It ignores political geography (such as the states of the Warring States period or the kingdoms, provinces, and counties of the Han Empire) and gives only a cursory account of the physical geography of China itself. It names the provinces, mountains, and marshes associated with the eight directions and the center, as well as the eight winds, and gives an extensive list of rivers and their sources. But the authors of "Terrestrial Forms" appear to be more interested in the wider world beyond China's borders, with an emphasis on the mythical, the magical, the distant, and the strange. Special attention is given to Mount Kunlun, the mountain at the center of the world, associated with the goddess known as the Queen Mother of the West and her elixir of immortality. Sections 4.15 and 4.16 list various strange and grotesque peoples living beyond the boundaries of the known world, along with various mythical places such as the land of the Torch Dragon and the grave-mound of Lord Millet.

This chapter emphasizes that physical features of terrain interact in important ways with plants, animals, and people. Section 4.8, for example, contends that various topographical features have specific physical effects on the people who live near them; section 4.9 (not included here) makes a similar case for types of soil. The chapter also has a section (4.11) that proposes a kind of zoological taxonomy based on physical features of various animals. Section 4.18 describes an evolutionary process that gives rise to various kinds of living creatures, and section 4.19 (not included here) describes an analogous process for the growth of minerals in the soil.

In general, the chapter's analytical viewpoint involves understanding the influences and cyclical transformation of yin and yang and the Five Phases. The chapter's sources include the "Questions About Heaven" poetical catechism of the *Chuci* anthology, the compendium of real and mythical geography known as the *Shanhaijing* (*Classic of Mountains and Seas*), and most likely other texts that are no longer extant. The chapter's understanding of world geography is based on the work of the cosmographer Zou Yan (fl. ca. 300 B.C.E.). He proposed that China (which was divided into nine provinces by the mythical hero Yu the Great after he had drained away the waters of the Great Flood) was situated in the southeastern corner of a great square continent divided into nine subcontinents. The great continent was itself one of nine such continents, all surrounded by a boundless ocean. This schematic view of world geography accounted for the location of Mount Kunlun to China's northwest and for the observable fact that China is bordered on the east and the southeast by water.

This chapter reminds the reader that while China is the "Middle Kingdom," it also is part of a much larger terrestrial world. And like chapter 3 (with which it forms a pair), it stresses that everything in the world is interconnected and in a constant state of flux.

Four

4.1 (in part)

Everything that exists on earth lies
within the six coordinates [and]
within the outer limits of the four directions.
To illuminate it, [it has] the sun and moon;
for its warp threads, [it has] the stars and planets;
to regulate it, [it has] the four seasons;
to control it, [it has] the great Year Star.

Between Heaven and Earth are nine continents and eight pillars. The dry land has nine mountains; the mountains have nine passes. There are nine marshes, eight winds, and six rivers. . . .

4.2 (in part)

The expanse within the four seas measures 28,000 *li* from east to west and 26,000 *li* from south to north. There are 8,000 *li* of watercourses passing through six valleys; there are six hundred named streams. There are 3,000 *li* of roads and paths.

Yu employed Tai Zhang to measure the earth from its eastern extremity to its western extremity. It measured 233,500 *li* and 75 double paces. He also employed Shu Hai to measure from its northern extremity to its southern extremity. It measured 233,500 *li* and 75 double paces.

4.4

The waters of the Yellow River issue from the northeast corner of the Kunlun Mountains and enter the ocean, flowing [eastward] along the route of Yu through the Piled-Stone Mountains.[1]

The Vermilion River issues from the southeast corner and flows southwest to the Southern Sea, passing to the east of Cinnabar Marsh. The Weakwater [River] issues from the southwest corner; when it reaches Heli, its overflowing waves pass through the Flowing Sands and flow south to enter the Southern Sea. The Yang River issues from the northwest corner and enters the Southern Sea south of [the country of] the Winged People.

The four streams [originate in] the divine springs of the [Yellow] Emperor, from which can be concocted all kinds of medicinal substances to bring physical well-being to the myriad creatures.

4.5

If you climb to a height double that of the Kunlun Mountains, [that peak] is called Cool Wind Mountain. If you climb it, you will not die. If you climb to a height that is doubled again, [that peak] is called Hanging Gardens. If you ascend it, you will gain supernatural power and be able to control the wind and the rain. If you climb to a height that is doubled yet again, it reaches up to Heaven itself. If you mount to there, you will become a spirit. It is called the abode of the Supreme Thearch.

The Fu [= Fusang] Tree in Yang Province is baked by the sun's heat. The Jian Tree on Mount Duguang, by which the gods ascend and descend [to and from Heaven], casts no shadow at midday. If one calls [from that place], there is no echo. It forms a canopy over the center of the world. The Ruo Tree is to the west of the Jian Tree. On its branches are ten suns; its blossoms cast light upon the earth.

4.8

In the [fabric of] the earth's shape,
east and west are the weft;
north and south are the warp.
Mountains are the cumulative [result of] accretion;
valleys are the cumulative [result of] cutting away.
High places govern birth;
low places govern death.
Hills govern maleness;
valleys govern femaleness.
Water [congealed] in a round shape forms pearls;
water [congealed] in a square shape forms jade.
Clear water yields gold; the dragon's lair in the depths yields the quintessential beauty of jade.

Various sorts of earth give birth [to living creatures], each according to its own kind.
For this reason,
The *qi* of mountains gives birth to a preponderance of men.

The *qi* of low wetlands gives birth to a preponderance of women.
The *qi* of dikes produces many cases of muteness.
The *qi* of wind produces many cases of deafness.
The *qi* of forests produces many cases of paralysis of the legs.
The *qi* of wood produces many cases of spinal deformity.
The *qi* of seashores produces many cases of ulcerations of the lower extremities.
The *qi* of stone produces much strength.
The *qi* of steep passes produces many cases of goiter.
The *qi* of heat produces many cases of early death.
The *qi* of cold produces much longevity.
The *qi* of valleys produces many cases of rheumatism.
The *qi* of hills produces many cases of rickets.
The *qi* of low-lying places produces much human fellow-feeling.
The *qi* of mounds produces much covetousness.
The *qi* of light soil produces much hastening after profit.
The *qi* of heavy soil produces much sluggishness.
The sound of clear water is small;
the sound of muddy water is great.
People [who live near] rushing water are light;
people [who live near] placid water are heavy.

The central region produces many sages.

All things are the same as their *qi;* all things respond to their own class. Thus,

In the south are herbs that do not die;
In the north is ice that does not melt.
In the east are countries of superior people.
In the west is the corpse of Xing Can.

4.11

All birds and fish are born of yin but are of the class of yang creatures. Thus birds and fish are oviparous. Fish swim through water; birds fly in the clouds. Thus at the beginning of winter, swallows and sparrows enter the sea and transform into clams.[2]

The myriad [living] creatures all are born as different kinds.

Silkworms eat but do not drink.
Cicadas drink but do not eat.

Mayflies neither eat nor drink. Armored and scaly creatures eat during the summer but hibernate in the winter.

Animals that eat without mastication have eight bodily openings and are oviparous.

Animals that chew have nine bodily openings and are viviparous.

Quadrupeds do not have feathers or wings. Animals that have horns do not have upper [incisor] teeth.

[Some] animals do not have horns and are fat but do not have front teeth.

[Other animals] have horns and are fat but do not have back teeth.

Creatures born during the day resemble their fathers;

creatures born at night resemble their mothers.

Extreme yin produces females;

extreme yang produces males.

Bears hibernate, and birds migrate seasonally.

4.14 (in part)

Wood overcomes Earth, Earth overcomes Water, Water overcomes Fire, Fire overcomes Metal, Metal overcomes Wood. Thus,

grain is born in the spring and dies in the fall.

Legumes are born in the summer and die in the winter.

Wheat is born in the autumn and dies in the summer.

Green vegetables are born in the winter and die in midsummer.

When Wood is in its prime, Water is old, Fire is about to be born, Metal is paralyzed [imprisoned], and Earth is dead.

When Fire is in its prime, Wood is old, Earth is about to be born, Water is paralyzed, and Metal is dead.

When Earth is in its prime, Fire is old, Metal is about to be born, Wood is paralyzed, and Water is dead.

When Metal is in its prime, Earth is old, Water is about to be born, Fire is paralyzed, and Wood is dead.

When Water is in its prime, Metal is old, Wood is about to be born, Earth is paralyzed, and Fire is dead.

4.18 (in part)

Downyhair gave birth to Oceanman.[3] Oceanman gave birth to Ruojun. Ruojun gave birth to sages; sages gave birth to ordinary people. Thus

creatures with scanty hair are born from ordinary people.

Winged Excellence gave birth to Flying Dragon. Flying Dragon gave birth to the phoenix. The phoenix gave birth to the symurgh. The symurgh gave birth to ordinary birds. Feathered creatures in general are born from ordinary birds.

Hairy Heifer gave birth to Responsive Dragon. Responsive Dragon gave birth to Establish Horse. Establish Horse gave birth to the *qilin.* The *qilin* gave birth to ordinary beasts. Hairy animals in general are born from ordinary beasts.

Scaly One gave birth to Wriggling Dragon. Wriggling Dragon gave birth to Leviathan. Leviathan gave birth to Establish Emanation. Establish Emanation gave birth to ordinary fishes. Scaly creatures in general are born from ordinary fishes.

Armored Abyss gave birth to First Dragon. First Dragon gave birth to Dark Sea-Turtle. Dark Sea-Turtle gave birth to Divine Tortoise. Divine Tortoise gave birth to ordinary turtles. Armored creatures in general are born from ordinary turtles.

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1. Kunlun is the name of a mythical mountain or mountain range northwest of China, home of the goddess Queen Mother of the West and associated with the elixir of immortality. It is not necessarily identical with the actual mountain range north of Tibet that bears the same name. The Piled-Stone Mountains are a mythical mountain range for which various early texts give different and inconsistent locations.
2. In early China, it was widely believed that species of animals could transform into other animals in the same yin-yang/Five Phase category. For another example see 5.3, in which field mice are said to change into quail.
3. All the names given in this section are fanciful or allegorical and, as such, are not included in the "Glossary of Personal Names."

Five

SEASONAL RULES

"Seasonal Rules" provides the means by which to
follow Heaven's seasons above,
use Earth's resources below,
determine standards and implement correspondences,
aligning them with human norms.
It is formed into twelve sections to serve as models and guides.
Ending and beginning anew,
they repeat limitlessly,
adapting, complying, imitating, and according
in predicting bad and good fortune.
Taking and giving, opening and closing,
each has its prohibited days,
issuing commands and administering orders,
instructing and warning according to the season.
[It] enables the ruler of humankind to know the means by which to manage affairs.

"An Overview of the Essentials" (21.2)

"Seasonal rules" is the third part of a trilogy with chapters 3 and 4. Having established, in those chapters, the patterns of Heaven (and their astrological significance) and the shape of Earth (and how creatures interact with topography), the *Huainanzi*'s authors turn here to the role of monthly and seasonal ritual time in the proper governing of the empire. Reflecting the annual waxing and waning of the powers of yin and yang and the successive seasonal potency of each of the Five Phases (Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal, and Water), the chapter prescribes ritual behavior, colors of vestments, and actions of government for each of the year's twelve months; proscribes certain other behaviors and actions; and warns of the bad consequences of applying the rules appropriate to any one season inappropriately to any of the others.

The first twelve sections of the chapter are substantially identical to a text, generally known as the *Yue ling* (*Monthly Ordinances*), that is preserved in the first twelve chapters of the syncretic text *Lüshi chunqiu* (*Mr. Lü's Spring and Autumn Annals*, ca. 240 B.C.E.) and also in the Han ritual compendium the *Liji* (*Record of Rites*). Perhaps the *Huainanzi* version was borrowed (with small but systematic differences) from the *Lüshi chunqiu* version, but it also is possible that both drew on a now unknown source text. Unlike the *Lüshi chunqiu* and *Liji* versions of the text, the *Huainanzi* divides the year not into the four natural seasons of the solar year but into five seasons (with the third month of summer being treated as an artificial fifth season, "midsummer") so as to make all the ritual prescriptions of the seasons conform to the correlative cosmology of the Five Phases. The chapter thus integrates yin-yang and Five Phase theory in a detailed and holistic fashion for the guidance of government policy throughout the year. *Huainanzi* 5 also contains three otherwise unknown additional sections that complement the material in the twelve month-by-month sections.

The excerpts included here are 5.3, the ordinances for the third and last month of spring (representing all of the first twelve sections of the text); 5.13, which relates the monthly ordinances particularly to the seasons and the directions; and 5.15, which describes the annual round of yang and yin (and the government's corresponding social policies) through the use of tool metaphors, a trope highly characteristic of the *Huainanzi*.

Five

5.3

In the final month of spring, Zhaoyao[1] points to *chen* [east-southeast]. [The lunar lodge] Seven Stars culminates at dusk; Ox Leader culminates at dawn. [Spring] occupies the east. Its days are *jia* and *yi.* Its beasts are [those of the] scaly [class]. Its [pentatonic] note is *jue*. The pitch pipe [of the third month] is Maiden Purity. The number [of spring] is eight. Its flavor is sour. Its smell is rank. Its sacrifices are made to the door god. From the body of the sacrificial victim, the spleen is offered first.

The *tong* tree begins to bloom. Field mice transform into quail. Rainbows first appear. Duckweed begins to sprout. The Son of Heaven wears bluegreen clothing. He mounts [a carriage drawn by] azure dragon [horses]. He wears azure jade [pendants] and flies a bluegreen banner. He eats wheat with mutton. He drinks water gathered from the eight winds and cooks with fire [kindled from] fern stalks. The imperial ladies of the Eastern Palace wear bluegreen clothing with bluegreen trim. They play the *qin* and the *se*. The weapon [of spring] is the spear. The domestic animal [of spring] is the sheep. [The Son of Heaven] holds the dawn session of court in the corner [chamber of the Mingtang] to the right of the Bluegreen Yang Chamber.[2]

[He orders] the Master of Boats to turn over the boats [to inspect them] five times over and five times back and then to deliver a report [on their condition] to the Son of Heaven. The Son of Heaven thereupon boards his boats for the first time [in the new year]. A sturgeon is offered in the inner chamber of the [ancestral] temple, and prayers are made that the wheat should bear grain.

In this month, the production of *qi* reaches its fullest, [and] yang *qi* is released. Young plants grow no more, and the sprouting plants attain their maximum growth, but they cannot [yet] be gathered in. The Son of Heaven orders those in authority to open the granaries and storehouses to assist the impoverished and the bereft, to relieve the exhausted and [those who are] cut off [from their families], and to open the strong rooms and treasuries to distribute rolls of silk. He sends embassies to the nobles, inquires after

eminent scholars, and performs courtesies to the worthy. He orders the Minister of Works, when the seasonal rains are about to descend, to mount his carriage as the water descends and, following all of the roads from the capital city, make an inspection of the plains and uncultivated fields, repairing the dikes and embankments, channeling the ditches and watercourses, following to its end every road and comprehending every byway,

beginning at the metropolis,
stopping [only] upon reaching the border.

Those who hunt, [whether with] nets or with arrows, with rabbit snares or bird nets, or by putting out poisoned bait, are prohibited from going out from the nine gates [of the city]. [The Son of Heaven] also [issues] a prohibition to the foresters in the wilderness, [saying that there must be] no cutting down of mulberry trees or cudrania trees. The turtledove spreads its wings, [and] the crested hoepoe lands in the mulberry tree. Preparing plain cocoon frames, round baskets and rectangular baskets, the royal consort and the royal concubines fast and perform austerities. Then they go to the mulberry [groves] in the eastern suburbs where

the lady overseers initiate
and supervise [the work of] sericulture.

[He] commands [those in charge of] the five storehouses to order the workmen to inspect the gold and iron, the pelts and hides, the sinew and horn, the arrowshaft bamboo and the bow-wood, the grease and glue, the cinnabar and lac, [seeing to it that] there is none that is not excellent. Selecting an auspicious day in the last ten day period of the month, [he holds] a great musical performance, which brings jubilation. Moreover [he orders] bulls to be mated with cows and stallions with mares; afterward the female animals are driven out to their herdsmen. He orders on behalf of the kingdom an exorcism at the nine gates [of the capital city], [and] sacrificial [animal victims] are torn apart in order to bring an end to the *qi* of springtime.

If the ordinances for this month are observed, sweet rain will fall during the three ten-day periods of the month. If, during the last month of spring, the ordinances of winter were carried out, then cold *qi* would from time to time issue forth; all the plants and trees would wither; and the state would [suffer] great fear. If the ordinances of summer were carried out, the people would [suffer] epidemics; the seasonal rains would not fall; and nothing

would grow on the mountains and tumuli. If the ordinances of autumn were carried out, Heaven would produce a flood of yin. Rains would fall [unseasonably] early, [and] military rebellions would break out.

The third month governs villages. Its tree is the pear.

5.13

There are five positions.

The extreme limit of the eastern region begins from Stele-Stone Mountain, passing through the Land of Chaoxian[3] and the Land of Giants. In the east it reaches the place from whence the sun rises, the land of the Fu [-Sang] tree, the wild fields of the Green-Land trees. The places ruled by Tai Hao and Gou Mang [encompass] 12,000 *li*.[4]

The ordinances [of the East] say: Hold fast to all prohibitions. Open what is closed or covered. Penetrate to the utmost all blocked-up passes. Extend to the frontiers and passes. Wander afar. Reject resentment and hatred. Free slaves and those condemned to hard labor [for crimes]. Avoid mourning and grief. Refrain from imposing corporal punishments. Open gates and dams. Proclaim a [general] distribution of wealth [from the public treasury]. Harmoniously resolve [any] resentment [that may be] abroad. Pacify the four directions. Act with pliancy and kindness. Put a stop to hardness and [overbearing] strength.

The extreme limit of the southern region begins from outside [= beyond] [the country of] the people of North-Facing Doors and passes through the country of Zhuan Xu. It extends to the wild lands of Stored Fire and Blazing Winds. The regions governed by the Vermilion Thearch and Zhu Rong encompass 12,000 *li*.

The ordinances [of the south] say: Ennoble the virtuous [and] reward the meritorious. Show kindness to the beneficent and excellent. Come to the aid of the hungry and thirsty. Raise up those who display prowess in agriculture. Relieve the poor and destitute. Show kindness to orphans and widows. Grieve with the infirm and ill. Dispense great emoluments [and] carry out great bestowals of rewards. Raise up ruined lineages. Support those who have no posterity. Enfeoff nobles. Establish [in office] worthy assistants.

The extreme limits of the central region extend from Kunlun east through the region of [the two peaks? of] Constancy Mountain. This is where the sun and the moon have their paths. It is the source of the Han and Jiang [=

Yangzi] rivers. [Here are] the open fields of the multitudes of people, [the lands] suitable for the five [kinds of] grain. At Dragon Gate the He [= Yellow] and the Qi rivers merge. [Here, Yu the Great] took swelling earth to dam the floodwaters and traced out the [nine] provinces. [These territories] extend eastward to SteleStone Mountain. The territories governed by the Yellow Emperor and the Sovereign of the Soil encompass 12,000 *li*.

The ordinances [of the center] say: Be evenhanded without inconsistency. Be enlightened without petty fault finding. Embrace, enfold, cover over, [and] enrich as with dew, so that there is none who is not tenderly enwrapped in [the royal] bosom. Be vast and overflowing, without private considerations. Let government be tranquil, to bring about harmony. Succor, nurture, and feed the old and the weak. Send condolences to [the families of] the dead, inquire after the sick, [all] to escort the myriad creatures on their return.

The extreme limits of the regions of the west extend from Kunlun through the Flowing Sands and the Sinking Feathers, westward to the country of Three Dangers. [They extend to] the Walled City of Stone and the Metal Palace [and] the open fields of the people who drink *qi* and do not die. The territories governed by Shao Hao and Ru Shou encompass 12,000 *li*.

The ordinances [of the west] say: Scrupulously use the laws. Punishment of the guilty must be carried out. Take precautions against thieves and robbers. Prohibit sexual license and debauchery. Issue instructions regarding the general collection [of harvest taxes]. Make a careful record of all collections [of revenue]. Repair city walls and outer fortifications. Repair and clear out drainage pipes. Close off footpaths and lanes; block up sluices and ditches. Shut off flowing water, swamps, gorges, and valleys. Guard doors and gates. Set out [in readiness] weapons and armor. Select officials. Punish the lawless.

The extreme limits of the regions of the north extend from the nine marshes and the farthest reaches of Exhaust-the-Summer Gloom, north to the Valley Where Ordinances Cease. Here are the open fields of freezing cold, piled-up ice, snow, hail, frost, sleet, and of pooling, soaking, massed-up water. The regions governed by Zhuan Xu and Xuan Ming encompass 12,000 *li*.

The ordinances [of the north] say: Extend all prohibitions. Firmly shut and store away. Repair [the fortifications of] the frontiers and passes. Fix

gates and water barriers. Prohibit walking around [outside the city walls]. Speedily carry out corporal punishments. Kill those who are under sentence of death. Close up the city gates and the gates of the outer fortifications. On a large scale, conduct investigations of strangers. Put a stop to communications and travel. Prohibit the pleasures of the night. Close up [chambers] early and open them late, in order to restrain lewd folk. If lewd persons are already to be found, they must be seized and held under severe restraint. Heaven has already almost completed its cycle: Punishments and executions must [be carried out] without any being pardoned; even in the case of [royal] relatives of surpassing venerableness, the law must be carried out to the full degree.

There must be no travel by water.

There must be no opening up of that which is stored away.

There must be no relaxation of punishments.

5.15

Regulating the standards:

For the great regulation of yin and yang, there are six standards.

Heaven is the marking cord.

Earth is the level.

Spring is the compass.

Summer is the balance beam.

Autumn is the square.

Winter is the weight.

The marking cord is that by which the myriad things are marked out.

The level is that by which the myriad things are leveled.

The compass is that by which the myriad things are made round.

The balance beam is that by which the myriad things are equalized.

The square is that by which the myriad things are made square.

The weight is that by which the myriad things are weighed.

The marking cord as a standard:

It is straight without swerving.

It is long and inexhaustible.

It is long enduring and does not wear out.

It reaches to far distances without deviation.

It matches Heaven in Potency.

It matches the spirits in illumination.

[By its means,] what one desires may be obtained,
and what one loathes may be caused to perish.

From ancient times to the present, there can be no deviation from its trueness. Its innate Potency is vast and subtle; it is broad and capacious. For this reason, the Supreme Thearch takes it as the ancestor of things.

The level as a standard:

It is flat and not bumpy,
balanced and not inconsistent,
broad and capacious,
spacious and abundant,
so as to be harmonious.
It is pliant and not hard,
acute but not injurious,
flowing and not stopped up,
simple [to use] and unsullied,
expansively penetrating and [proceeding in] an orderly course.
It is comprehensive and subtle but not sluggish.
The level makes things perfectly flat without error,
thereby the myriad things are leveled.

The people are without malice or scheming; resentment and hatred do not arise. Therefore the Supreme Thearch uses it to make all things level.

The compass as a standard:

It revolves without repeating itself.
It is round without turning [from its course].
Great but without excess,
broad and spacious,
feelings and actions are ordered [thereby].
It is expansively penetrating and [proceeds] on an orderly course.
Abundant! Simple!
The hundred forms of resentment do not arise.
The standard of the compass does not err;
it gives birth to both *qi* and pattern.

The balance beam as a standard:

It is deliberate but does not lag behind.
It is impartial and not resented.
It bestows but is not benevolent.
It condoles but does not rebuke.

It adjusts to an appropriate level the people's emoluments.
It continues but does not heap up.
Majestic! Brilliant!
Only those [possessing] Potency act thus.
Nurturing, bringing to full growth, transforming, rearing;
the myriad creatures abundantly flourish.
It makes the five [kinds of] grain bear seed,
and the bounded fields be fruitful.

Government [by this standard] does not err; Heaven and Earth are illuminated thereby.

The square as a standard:
It is majestic and not contrary.
It is hard and unbroken.
It seizes but does not provoke resentment,
[Penetrates] within but does no injury.
It is stern and severe but not coercive.
Its ordinances are carried out but without wasteful destruction.
In killing and smiting, its ends are attained;
the enemy is brought to submission.

The square's trueness is without error; all punishments are [thereby] suitably fulfilled.

The weight as a standard:
It is hasty but not excessive.
It kills but does not slaughter.
It is filled to completion.
It is comprehensive and subtle but without sluggishness.
It inflicts destruction on things but does not single things out.
It punishes and kills without pardon.
Sincerity and trustworthiness are essential to it,
Strength and sincerity make it firm.
Cleanse away filth! Chastise the evil!
Wickedness may not be tolerated.

Therefore, if correct [policies] for winter are to be carried out, [the ruler] must appear
weak in order to be strong,
pliant in order to be firm.

The weight's trueness is without error; through it the myriad things are shut away.

In the regulation of the Mingtang,
be tranquil, taking the level as a pattern.
Be active, taking the marking cord as a pattern.
For the government of spring, adopt the compass.
For the government of autumn, adopt the square.
For the government of winter, adopt the weight.
For the government of summer, adopt the balance beam.
Thus dryness and dampness, cold and heat, will arrive in their proper seasonal nodes.
Sweet rain and fertile dew will descend in their proper times.

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1. Zhaoyao is a star at the end of the "handle" of the Northern Dipper, which acts as a celestial dial making a complete circuit of the horizon in a year. Here it is described as pointing in succession to the months and their associated directions.
2. The Mingtang (Bright Hall) was a temple in which the ruler worshipped Heaven. Different descriptions of this hallowed structure are found in a number of early texts. The *Huainanzi* depicts it as a structure containing nine rooms, in which the ruler performs rituals corresponding to the months and the seasons.
3. Chaoxian is an ancient Chinese name for Korea.
4. Section 5.13 deals with geography on a grand scale, describing not only China ("the central region") but also fantastic regions beyond China's frontiers, ruled by mythical beings.

Six

SURVEYING OBSCURITIES

"Surveying Obscurities" provides the means by which to discuss
Utmost Essence penetrating the Nine Heavens,
Utmost Subtlety sinking into the Formless,
Unblemished Purity entering Utmost Clarity,
and Luminous Brightness penetrating Dark Obscurity.
It begins by
grasping things and deducing their categories,
observing them, taking hold of them,
lifting them up, and arranging them,
and pervasively positing them as categories of similarity,
by which things can be understood as ideas and visualized as forms.
It then
penetrates various obstructions,
bursts open various blockages,
to guide your awareness,
to connect it to the Limitless.
[It] then thereby illuminates
the stimuli of the various categories of things,
the responses of identical *qi,*
the unions of yin and yang,
and the intricacies of forms and shapes.
It is what leads you to observe and discern in a far-reaching and expansive way.

"An Overview of the Essentials" (21.2)

The first five chapters of the *Huainanzi* establish the characteristics of the Way and its primacy in cosmogony, in the attainment of sagehood, and in the cosmological realms of Heaven, Earth, and Time. In chapter 6, "Surveying Obscurities," the Huainan masters turn to a phenomenon they cannot fully explain, although they are certain that it exists. This is

"resonance," which is thought of as a kind of sympathetic vibration in the force field of *qi* that pervades the cosmos. Because resonance acts not only on physical objects but also on emotions and intentions, the actions of humans have clear and predictable effects in the natural world. Impiety, injustice, and bad government lead to human catastrophes and natural disasters, whereas following the Way and instituting good government lead to human happiness and celestial harmony. Accordingly, it is imperative, the chapter maintains, for the ruler to look into the roots of bad and good government, identify himself with the One, and make his actions conform to the Way, so as to lay the foundation for the whole world to be harmonious and tranquil. In the end, however, the means by which resonance operates remain cloaked in obscurity. As the chapter's title implies, the phenomenon can be perceived in its general outlines but not with complete clarity.

Some passages in "Surveying Obscurities" resemble lines in the *Zhuangzi*, the *Lüshi chunqiu*, the *Guanzi*, and other early texts, but the chapter as a whole is not heavily dependent on such texts as sources. Instead, it draws its illustrative material from a body of anecdotal lore in wide circulation in the Warring States and early imperial eras, material that also is used extensively in the later chapters of the *Huainanzi*.

Although "Surveying Obscurities" is one of the shortest chapters in the entire *Huainanzi*, it is arguably also one of the most important because it explains the constant interaction and transformation of all phenomena central to the *Huainanzi*'s worldview.

Six

6.1 (in part)

In ancient times Music Master Kuang played the tune “White Snow” and because of that, spiritlike creatures descended [from heaven]; wind and rain arrived violently; Duke Ping became impotent and ill; and the lands of the state of Jin reddened [with drought].[1]

The Commoner Woman cried out to Heaven. Thunder and lightning beat down; Duke Jing’s lookout tower collapsed; his limbs and body were broken and slashed; and floodwaters gushed from the sea.[2]

Now the blind music master and the Commoner Woman

were of a [social] rank as lowly as swaying weeds;
their [political] weight was as light as windblown feathers;

yet

by concentrating their essences and disciplining their intentions,
abandoning their [mundane] responsibilities and storing up spirit [energy],

upward, they penetrated to ninefold Heaven, rousing and putting into action the utmost essence.

Looking at things from this perspective in regard to the punishments [sent by] Heaven on high: Though one dwells

in a broad wasteland or a dark valley,
at a remote distance or a secluded hideaway,
in a multilayered stone refuge,
or at a frontier barrier or narrow defile,

there is no place where one may escape them. This is clear.

6.2

That things in their [various] categories are mutually responsive is [something] dark, mysterious, deep, and subtle.

Knowledge is not capable of assessing it;
argument is not capable of explaining it.

Thus,

when the east wind arrives, wine turns clear and overflows [its vessels];
when silkworms secrete fragmented silk, the *shang* string [of a stringed instrument] snaps.

Something has stimulated them.

When a picture is traced out with the ashes of reeds, the moon's halo has a [corresponding] gap.
When the leviathan dies, comets appear.

Something has moved them.

Thus, when a sage occupies the throne, he embraces the Way and does not speak, and his nurturance reaches to the myriad people. But when ruler and ministers [harbor] distrust in their hearts, back-to-back arcs appear in the sky. The mutual responses of spirit *qi* are subtle indeed!

Thus,

mountain clouds are like grassy hummocks;
river clouds are like fish scales;
dryland clouds are like smoky fire;
cataract clouds are like billowing water.

All resemble their forms and evoke responses according to their class.

The burning mirror takes fire from the sun;
the square receptacle takes dew from the moon.

Of [all the things] between Heaven and Earth, even a skilled astrologer cannot master all their techniques. [Even] a hand [that can hold] minutely tiny and indistinct things cannot grasp a beam of light. However, from what is within the palm of one's hand, one can trace [correlative] categories to beyond the extreme end point [of the cosmos]. [Thus] that one can set up [these implements] and produce water and fire is [a function of] the mutually [responsive] movement of yin and yang of the same *qi.* That is how Fu Yue bestrode [the lunar lodges] Winnowing Basket and Tail.

Thus,

maximum yin is freezing cold;
maximum yang is blazing hot.

The two of them come together and interconnect to bring about harmony, and the myriad things thereby are born. If there were lots of males and no females, how indeed would transformation be able to create [anything]? This is what is known as

the argument that is not spoken

and the Way that is not [called] “the Way.”

Thus

to attract those who are far-off [i.e., emissaries], one employs non-action;

to cherish those who are close by, one employs non-interference.

But only one who “walks by night” is able to have this [technique]. Thus [he] retires [his] fast horses so they [only] make dung, and [his] chariot tracks do not need to extend beyond far-off lands. This is what is called

racing while sitting, bathing on dry land,

darkness at noon, bright light at night,

melting pitch in winter,

making ice in summer.

6.6

In ancient times, when Wang Liang and Zaofu went driving, [as soon as] they mounted their chariots and took hold of the reins, the horses set themselves in order and wanted to work together.

They obediently paced in step with one another;

[whether] pulling hard or easing off, they were as one.

Their hearts were in tune and their *qi* harmonious;

their bodies [became] more and more light and coordinated.

They were content to work hard and happy to go forward;

they galloped away as if they would vanish.

They went right and left like [the waving of] a whip;

they circled around like a jade bracelet.

All people of that era considered [Wang Liang and Zaofu] to be superlative [charioteers], but that was because they had not yet seen any [truly] worthy ones. Now consider the charioteering of Qian Qie and Da Bing. They

considered reins and bits superfluous,

got rid of whips and cast aside goads.

Before the chariot began to move, it was starting on its own.

Before the horses were given the signal, they were walking on their own.

They paced [like the] sun and moved [like the] moon.

They flashed [like the] stars and advanced [like the] dark.

They raced [like] lightning and leaped [like] ghosts.

Advancing or withdrawing, gathering strength or stretching out,

they did not see the slightest barrier.

Thus,

with no gesturing or pointing,
with no cursing or scolding,
they overtook the wild geese flying to Piled-Stone Mountain,
passed the jungle fowl [flying to] Guyu Mountain.
Their galloping was like flying;
their bursts of speed like thread snapping.
[It was] like riding an arrow or mounting the wind,
like following a cyclone and returning in an instant.
At dawn they started from Fusang
and set with the sun at Luotang.

This was taking something unused and obtaining its usefulness: it was not done by examining things through reason or thought or through the exercise of manual skill. Whenever urgent desires took form in the breasts [of Qian Qie and Da Bing], their quintessential spirits were [already] communicated to the six horses. This was a case of using non-driving to go driving.

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1. "White Snow" was a work of sacred music. When Duke Ping (of Jin, r. 557–532 B.C.E.) ordered it played in a secular setting, calamities ensued.
2. The nameless "Commoner Woman" was falsely accused by her sister-in-law of murdering her mother-in-law. Duke Jing of Qi reigned from 547 to 490 B.C.E.

Seven

QUINTESSENTIAL SPIRIT

"Quintessential Spirit" provides the means by which to
trace to the source the root from which human life arises
and understand what animates humans' form, frame, and nine orifices.
Taking its images from Heaven,
it coordinates and identifies humans' blood and *qi*
with thunder and lightning, wind and rain;
correlates and categorizes humans' happiness and anger
with dawn and dusk, cold and heat.
Judging the distinctions between life and death,
distinguishing the traces of identity and difference,
regulating the workings of movement and stillness,
it thereby returns to the Ancestor of nature and destiny.
It is what enables you to
cherish and nourish the essence and spirit,
pacify and still the ethereal and earthly souls,
not change the self on account of things,
and fortify and preserve the abode of Emptiness and Nothingness.

"An Overview of the Essentials" (21.2)

"Quintessential Spirit" is the first chapter of the *Huainanzi* to introduce human beings systematically into the grand scheme of things. The text continues its methodical explication of the underlying powers, patterns, and forces of the cosmos and its creatures before turning, in the later chapters of the work, to illustrations and amplifications of the workings of the Way in the world of affairs.

Chapters 1 and 2 introduced cosmology and ontology; chapters 3 through 5 explored the various dimensions of Heaven, Earth, and Time; and chapter 6 explained the mysterious operations of resonance by which things in the world interact through stimuli and responses. In chapter 7, the authors turn to human beings, the third leg of the early Chinese conceptual tripod of

Heaven, Earth, and Man. They identify the Quintessential Spirit as the primordial vital energy of consciousness, what gives humans their distinctive abilities to function cognitively in the outer world and contemplatively in the inner world.

The authors begin by identifying the origins of the Quintessential Spirit in the genesis of the cosmos. It is associated with Heaven and yang energies, in contrast to the physical body, which is associated with Earth and yin energies. Perfected human beings are able to preserve this Quintessential Spirit through a meditative practice ("techniques of the mind") that involves emptying the mind and cultivating tranquillity, a practice described throughout this chapter: human beings tend to lose Quintessential Spirit through an externalizing process that occurs through excessive stimulation of the senses. But adepts at inner-cultivation practice —sages, the "Perfected," and the "Genuine"—prevent this loss by maintaining an inner focus through careful circulation of the vital breath, eventually reaching complete union with the Way and so developing many of its characteristics. Using an enhanced cognitive function referred to as "spiritlike illumination," they maintain this connection throughout their interactions in the phenomenal realm, thus establishing that inner cultivation is the foundation of success in the outer world.

The authors of this chapter express their contempt for two groups of rivals: practitioners of the moving meditation called "Guiding and Pulling" (of the *qi*), portrayed as health fanatics who nurture their bodies at the expense of the minds and spirits; and Confucian literati, who stifle and suppress their true natures in a vain effort to cultivate themselves. This chapter shares a number of phrases and terms with the "inner chapters" of the *Zhuangzi* but also is greatly indebted to the "Inward Training" chapters of the *Guanzi* and probably other works of the inner-cultivation tradition that are now lost.

Seven

7.1

Of old, in the time before there was Heaven and Earth:
There were only images and no forms.
All was obscure and dark,
vague and unclear,
shapeless and formless,
and no one knows its gateway.
There were two spirits, born in murkiness, one that established Heaven and the other that constructed Earth.
So vast! No one knows where they ultimately end.
So broad! No one knows where they finally stop.
Thereupon
they differentiated into the yin and the yang
and separated into the eight cardinal directions.
The firm and the yielding formed each other;
the myriad things thereupon took shape.
The turbid vital energy became creatures;
the refined vital energy became humans.
Therefore,
the Quintessential Spirit is of Heaven;
the skeletal system is of Earth.
When the Quintessential Spirit enters its gateway
and the skeletal system returns to its root,
how can I still survive?
For this reason, the sages
model themselves on Heaven,
accord with their genuine responses,
are not confined by custom,
or seduced by other men.
They take
Heaven as father,
Earth as mother,

yin and yang as warp,
the four seasons as weft.
Through the tranquillity of Heaven, they become pure.
Through the stability of Earth, they become calm.
Among the myriad things,
those who lose this perish;
those who follow this live.
Tranquillity and stillness are the dwellings of spiritlike illumination;
emptiness and nothingness are where the Way resides.
For this reason,
those who seek for it externally lose it internally;
those who preserve it internally attain it externally as well.
It is like the roots and branches of trees: none of the thousands of limbs and tens of thousands of leaves does not derive from the roots.

7.4

The apertures of perception [eyes and ears] are the portals of the Quintessential Spirit.
The vital energy and attention are the emissaries and servants of the Five Orbs.
When the eyes and ears are enticed by the joys of sound and color, then the Five Orbs oscillate and are not stable.
When the Five Orbs oscillate and are not stable, then the blood and vital energy are agitated and not at rest.
When the blood and vital energy are agitated and not at rest, then the Quintessential Spirit courses out [through the eyes and ears] and is not preserved.
When the Quintessential Spirit courses out and is not preserved,
then when either good fortune or misfortune arrives, although it be the size of hills and mountains, one has no way to recognize it.
But
if you make your ears and eyes totally clear and profoundly penetrating and not enticed by external things;
if your vital energy and attention are empty, tranquil, still, and serene and you eliminate lusts and desires;
if the Five Orbs are stable, reposed, replete, and full and not leaking [the vital energies];

if your Quintessential Spirit is preserved within your physical frame and does not flow out;

then even gazing back beyond bygone ages and looking further than things that are to come; even these things would not be worth doing, much less discriminating between bad and good fortune.

Therefore it is said, “The farther you go, the less you know.” This says that the Quintessential Spirit cannot be allowed to be enticed by external things.

Therefore,

the five colors disrupt the eyes and cause them to be unclear;

the five sounds confuse the ears and cause them to not be acute;

the five tastes disrupt the mouth and cause it to lose the ability to taste;

preferences confuse the nature and cause it to fly about [from one thing to the next].

These four things are how the people of this world commonly nourish their natures.

However, they all are human attachments.

Therefore it is said:

“Lusts and desires cause humans’ vital energy to dissipate;

likes and dislikes cause human’ minds to tire.”

If you do not quickly eliminate them, your attention and vital energy will diminish daily.

7.7 (in part)

Those whom we call the Perfected are people whose inborn nature is merged with the Way.

Therefore,

they possess it but appear to have nothing.

They are full but appear to be empty.

They are settled in this unity and do not know of any duality

They cultivate what is inside and pay no attention to what is outside.

They illuminate and clarify Grand Simplicity;

taking no action, they revert to the Unhewn.[1]

They embody the foundation and embrace the spirit in order to roam freely within the confines of Heaven and Earth. Untrammeled, they ramble outside this dusty world and wander aimlessly in their taskless calling.

Unfettered and unhindered, they harbor no clever devices or cunning knowledge in their minds.

Thus death and life are great indeed, but they do not alter them. Although Heaven and Earth support and nourish, they are not protected by them. They discern the flawless and do not get mixed up with things. While seeing the chaos of affairs, they are able to preserve their origin.

Beings like these

negate obsession and fear
and cast aside sensory perceptions.
Their mental activity is concentrated internally
and penetrates through to comport with the One.
At rest, they have no objectives;
in motion, they set no goals.
Artlessly they go forth;
peacefully they come back.
Their bodies are like withered wood;
their minds are like dead ashes.
They forget the Five Orbs;
lose their physical frames;
know without studying;
see without looking;
complete without acting;
and differentiate without judging.
When stimulated, they respond;
when pressed, they move;
when it is unavoidable, they go forth,
like the brilliant glow of a flame,
like the mimicry of a shadow.

Taking the Way as their guiding thread, they are necessarily so. Embracing the foundation of Grand Purity, they contain nothing, and things cannot disturb them. Vast and empty, they are tranquil and without worry.

Great marshes may catch fire, but it cannot burn them.
Great rivers may freeze over, but it cannot chill them.
Great thunder may shake the mountains, but it cannot startle them.
Great storms may darken the sun, but it cannot harm them.
For this reason,
they view precious pearls and jade as being the same as gravel.

They view the supremely exalted and maximally favored [at court] as being the same as wandering guest [scholars].
They view [the beauties] Mao Qiang and Xi Shi as being the same as funerary figurines.
They take life and death to be a single transformation
and the myriad things to be a single whole.
They merge their vital essence with the Root of Great Purity
and roam freely beyond the boundless.
They have a vital essence but do not [recklessly] expend it;
and have a spirit but do not [thoughtlessly] use it.
They identify with the artlessness of the Great Unhewn
and take their stand amid the supremely pure.
. . .

This is how their Quintessential Spirit is able to verge upon the Way; this is the roaming of the Perfected.

7.8

If you huff and puff, exhale and inhale,
blow out the old and pull in the new,
practice the Bear Hang, the Bird Stretch,
the Duck Splash, the Ape Leap,
the Owl Gaze, and the Tiger Stare:

This is what is practiced by those who nurture the body. They are not the practices of those who polish the mind [e.g., the Perfected]. They make their spirit overflow, without losing its fullness. When, day and night, without injury, they bring the spring to external things, they unite with, and give birth to, the seasons in their own minds.

Moreover, there are those who mortify their bodies without harming their minds,
and those who cede their dwelling [i.e., the mind] without diminishing their Quintessence.
The thinking of the leper is not altered;
the body of the madman not impaired.

But when their spirits eventually make their far-off journey, who will have time to think about what they did [in their lives]? Thus even though the body disappears, the spirit is never transformed. If you use what does not transform in response to transformations, [even through] a thousand

alterations and ten thousand evolutions, you will not have begun to reach a limit.

What transforms returns to the Formless;
what does not transform is born together with Heaven and Earth.

A tree dies because its greenness has departed. But can that which gives life to a tree be a tree itself? Analogously, what fills the body is not the body. Thus,

What gives birth to the living never dies, yet that to which it gives birth does die.
What transforms things never transforms, yet that which it transforms does transform.
If you take the world lightly, then your spirit will have no attachments.
If you minimize the myriad things, then your mind will not be led astray.
If you equalize death and life, then your mentality will not be fearful.
If you take all alterations and transformations as [being] the same, then your clarity will not be darkened.

The masses take these as empty words, but I take them as my ideal and prove them true.

7.14

Shallow scholars in this declining age do not understand how to get to the origins of their minds and return to their root. They merely sculpt and polish their natures and adorn and stifle their genuine responses in order to interact with their age. Thus,

when their eyes desire something, they forbid it with measures;
when their minds delight in something, they restrict it with rites.

They hasten forth in circles and formally scrape and bow

while the meat goes bad and becomes inedible
and the wine goes sour and becomes undrinkable.
Externally they restrict their bodies;
internally they belabor their minds.
They damage the harmony of yin and yang
and constrain the genuine responses of their nature to fate.

Thus throughout their lives, they are sorrowful people.

Those who penetrate through to the Way are not like this.
They regulate the genuine responses of their natures,

cultivate the techniques of the mind,
nourish these with harmony,
take hold of these through suitability.
They delight in the Way and forget what is lowly;
They find repose in Potency and forget what is base.
Since their natures desire nothing, they attain whatever they desire.
Since their minds delight in nothing, there are no delights in which they do not partake.
Those who do not exceed their genuine responses do not allow them to tie down their Potency.
Those who find ease in their natures do not allow them to injure their inner harmony.

Thus with
their relaxed bodies and untrammeled awareness,
their standards and regulations,
they can become models for the empire.

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1. The “Unhewn” (sometimes also translated as the “Uncarved Block”) refers to the original, undifferentiated state of matter: a block of wood or stone that has not yet been carved and therefore retains the possibility of being carved into anything. It is a common Daoist metaphor for the unitary mind of the sage.

Eight

THE BASIC WARP

"The Basic Warp" provides the means by which to
illuminate the Potency of the great sages
and penetrate the Way of the Unique Inception.
Delineating and summarizing the devolution of decadent eras from past to present,
it thereby praises the flourishing prosperity of earlier ages
and criticizes the corrupt governments of later ages.
It is what enables you to
dispense with the acuity and keenness of hearing and sight,
still the responses and movements of the essence and spirit,
restrain effusive and ephemeral viewpoints,
temper the harmony of nourishing your nature,
distinguish the conduct of [the Five] Thearchs and [Three] Kings,
and set out the differences between small and great.

"An Overview of the Essentials" (21.2)

"The Basic Warp," the last of the *Huainanzi*'s "root" chapters, uses several different but generally complementary descriptions of an imagined historical past to raise questions about the nature of sage-rulership and to criticize government in the present era. In all these scenarios, an archaic era of agrarian primitivism is idealized as a time when sages, embodying the Way and its Potency, could govern almost invisibly by means of non-action. Both the human and the natural worlds responded resonantly to the sages' superior qualities. Qualities like Humaneness and Music were intrinsic to the sage and were not (as they later became) mere expedients to control the populace in times that departed ever more profoundly from the Way. But inevitably the world began to devolve from the archaic ideal. People perceived deficiencies in their lives and increasingly took steps to satisfy their desires. The more they did so, the more the situation degenerated from primordial simplicity and unity. Thus we find ourselves in an era of discord and turmoil. What is to be done?

The answer is perhaps surprising. Although latter-day calamities have led to suffering and turmoil, they also have created an opportunity for a contemporary ruler—one wise enough to avoid the pitfalls of extravagance, excess, cruelty, and greed—to establish a new era of sagely rule. In tranquil times, there is no need for remarkable men or extraordinary measures. But in times of danger and trouble, a ruler who knows how to embody the unmediated unity of the Grand One, to align himself with the Way and its Potency, to match his actions to the rhythms of the cosmos, and to become imbued with spirit illumination has a golden opportunity to govern as a sage.

The chapter's title, "The Basic Warp," proposes an analogy: the Way, Potency, Humaneness, Rightness, and other qualities of the sage are like the warp threads strung on a loom in preparation for weaving a piece of cloth. Into this warp, the ruler weaves the weft threads of administration to produce the fabric of good government.

The divinities and sage-rulers that appear in this chapter are the common property of a wide range of early Chinese texts. Although "The Basic Warp" is not heavily dependent on any particular source text for its material, its analytical point of view seems clearly grounded in the *Laozi*.

Eight

8.3

The people of antiquity made their *qi* the same as that of Heaven and Earth; they wandered in an era of unity. At that time,

there was no garnering advantage by praise and rewards,
no intimidation by mutilations and punishments.
Ritual and Rightness, purity and modesty, had not yet been established;
slander and flattery, Humaneness and contempt, had not yet been set up;

and the myriad peoples had not yet [begun to] treat one another with fraud and oppression, cruelty and exploitation—it was as if they were still immersed in turbid obscurity.

Coming down to the era of decline, [it transpired that]
people were abundant, but wealth was scarce;
people labored to the utmost, but their nourishment was insufficient.

Thus competition and strife were born, and Humaneness was valued. The Humane and the petty minded were[, however,] not treated equitably.

Neighbors formed groups,
and friends formed cabals.
They promoted falsehood and deceit,
cherished a spirit of contrivance and artifice,
and lost [their] natural tendencies.

Thus Rightness was valued.

None of [the people's] feelings associated with yin and yang [i.e., sexual feelings] were free from the stimulation of blood and *qi.* Men and women [therefore] gathered in places and promiscuously dwelt together without distinction. Thus Ritual was valued.

Instinctive feelings overflowed and were mutually conflicting. They could not stop themselves and therefore were discordant. Thus Music was valued.

Thus, Humaneness, Rightness, Ritual, and Music, though able to save [the world] from ruin, are still not the perfection of comprehensive

governance.

Humaneness is able to save people from strife;
Rightness is able to save people from errors;
Ritual is able to save people from lewdness;
Music is able to save people from melancholy.
When spirit illumination is established in the world, then minds revert to their original state.
When minds revert to their original state, then people's natures become good.
When people's natures become good, they are followed by Heaven and Earth and by yin and yang.

Wealth then becomes sufficient. When wealth becomes sufficient, the people are respectful; covetousness, petty mindedness, anger, and competition have no occasion to arise. From this, one can see that [under these circumstances,] there is no need for Humaneness and Rightness.

When the Way and its Potency are established in the world, then the people become pure and simple. Thus

their eyes are not fixed on beauty;
their ears are not drawn to sounds.

If there were [entertainers] sitting in rows and singing songs or prancing about with their hair hanging loose—

even if they were as alluring as Mao Qiang or Xi Shi, [the audience] would take no pleasure in them;
even if the tunes were "Falling Wings" or "Martial," they would not find any joy in them.

Even if the lewdness had no limit, it would come to nothing.

From this one can see that [under these circumstances,] there is no need for Ritual and Music. Thus,

when Potency declines, Humaneness is born;
when conduct fails, Rightness is established.
When harmony is lost, there are sounds and ditties;
when rituals are decayed, comportment is gaudy.

Thus,

if one understands spirit illumination, then one can understand the inadequacy of the Way and its Potency for effecting things;
if one understands the Way and its Potency, then one can understand the inadequacy of Humaneness and Rightness in putting things into

practice;
if one understands Humaneness and Rightness, then one can understand the inadequacy of Ritual and Music in regulating conduct.

8.7

The thearch embodies the Grand One;
the king emulates yin and yang;
the hegemon[1] follows the four seasons;
the prince uses the six pitch pipes.

Now the Grand One
encloses and contains Heaven and Earth,
weighs on and crushes the mountains and streams,
retains or emits yin and yang,
stretches out and drags along the four seasons,
knots the net of the eight directional end points,
and weaves the web of the six coordinates.

It renews the dew and universally overflows without partiality; it [causes the] waterflies to fly and wriggling things to move; there is nothing that does not rely on it and its Potency in order to live.

Yin and yang
uphold the harmony of Heaven and Earth and shape the physical forms of the myriad diversities.
[They] retain *qi* and transform things in order to bring to completion the kinds of the myriad categories.
They stretch out and draw back,
roll up and uncoil.
They sink into the unfathomable,
end and begin [again] in emptiness and fullness,
revolving in the without-origin.

The four seasons:
spring birth,
summer growth,
autumn harvest,
winter storage.
For obtaining and bestowing, there are times;
for going out and entering, there are measures.

Opening and closing, expanding and contracting, they do not deviate from their [proper] order;
happiness and anger, hardness and pliancy, do not depart from their principles.

The six pitch pipes are
life and death,
reward and punishment,
granting and taking away.

Anything that is otherwise lacks the Way. Therefore
pay heed to the balance beam and weight, the level and the marking cord;
examine into the light and the heavy.

This is sufficient to govern within the boundaries [of a state].

Therefore one who embodies the Grand One
discerns the true responses of Heaven and Earth
and penetrates the regularities of the Way and its Potency.
His comprehensive brilliance bedazzles like the sun and moon;
his essence and spirit penetrate the myriad things.
His motion and rest are in tune with yin and yang;
his happiness and anger harmonize with the four seasons;
his Moral Potency and magnanimity extend to beyond the borderlands;
and his fame and reputation pass down to later generations.

One who emulates yin and yang
has Potency comparable to Heaven and Earth
and brilliance like that of the sun and moon;
his essence is as comprehensive as that of ghosts and spirits.
He wears roundness as a hat
and squareness as shoes;
he embraces the gnomon
and holds fast to the marking cord.
Within, he is able to govern his person;
without, he is able to win people's minds.

When he promulgates edicts and issues commands, there is no one in the world who does not comply with them.

One who follows the four seasons
is pliant but not fragile,
hard but not brittle,

lenient but not reckless,
demanding but not overbearing.

He is liberal, pliant, responsible, and indulgent in his nourishing the multitudes of creatures; in his Moral Potency he is magnanimous to the simpleminded and forgiving of the deviant; he is devoid of partiality.

One who uses the six pitch pipes
quells disorder and prohibits violence;
advances the meritorious and demotes the unworthy.
He supports the reliable so as to create order;
he drives away the treacherous in order to create peace;
he straightens out the bent in order to create uprightness.

He discerns the Way of prohibitions and pardons, openings and closings. He relies on timeliness and utilizes the power of circumstance in order to win over the hearts of the people.

If a thearch [merely] embodies yin and yang, [his throne] will be usurped.

If a king [merely] models himself on the four seasons, [his territory] will be seized.

If a hegemon [merely] regulates himself by the six standards, he will be disgraced.

If a prince neglects the level and the marking cord, he will be eradicated.

If [a person of] small [standing] carries out great [affairs], the results will be turbulent, insubstantial, and uncongenial.

If a great [person] carries out petty [matters], the results will be narrow, cramped, and unpleasing.

If [the] honorable and mean do not lose their [proper] embodiments, then the world will be [properly] governed.

8.9

Generally speaking, disorder arises from profligate indolence. The sources of profligate indolence are fivefold:

[erecting] great roof beams and framing timbers;
building palaces and halls;
courtyard buildings, storied towers, and covered walkways;
aviaries and well houses;
with pillars and planks of fruitwood;

all joined together in mutual support;
masterpieces of skillful carpentry;
carved into twists and coils;
overflowingly engraved and carved and polished;
adorned with peculiar patterns and spiraling waves;
[with ornamentation] dripping, floating, billowing, subsiding;
water chestnut and dwarf oak twining and enfolding;
extensive, profuse, disordered, fecund;
cleverly artificial, joined together in apparent confusion;
each [effect] exceeding the last:
Such is profligate indolence based on wood.
The depths of excavated ponds and lakes;
the distance of aligned dikes and embankments;
the flow of diverted [streams] through gorges and valleys;
the straitness of ornamental zigzag channels;
the piling up of stone slabs and the strewing about of stones
in order to make borders and set out stepping-stones;
the placing of barriers and dampers in the furious rapids
so as to stir up the surging waves;
the making of angles and riffles, bends and meanders
to imitate the rivers of [Fan]yu and [Cang]wu;
the augmenting of lotus and water-chestnut plantings
so as to feed turtles and fish,
swans, geese, kingfishers,
fed with leftover rice and sorghum;
dragon boats with prows carved like water birds,
wafted along by the breeze for pure pleasure:
Such is profligate indolence based on water.
High pounded-earth city walls and fortifications,
plantings of trees [as barriers] in passes and defiles;
the impressiveness of lofty belvederes and observation posts;
the immensity of extravagant gardens and walled parks,
the sight of which satisfies every desire and wonder,
the height of lofty gate towers that ascend to the clouds and blue [sky];
great mansions rising tier upon tier,
rivaling the height of Kunlun;
the construction of barrier walls and enclosures,

the making of networks of roads,
the leveling of highlands and filling in of depressions,
the piling up of earth to make mountains,
for the sake of easy passage to great distances;
the straightening of roads through flatlands and hills,
so that [drivers] may ceaselessly gallop and race
without [fear] of stumbles or falls:
Such is profligate indolence based on earth.
Great bells and tripods,
beautiful and heavy implements,
engraved all over with floral and reptilian designs,
all twisting and intertwined,
with recumbent rhinos and crouching tigers,
coiling dragons interlacing together;
blazingly bright and confusingly contrived,
shiningly dazzling, brilliantly glittering,
topsy-turvy, convoluted, luxuriant, tangled,
[with] overall fretwork and written inscriptions,
[with] engraved and polished ornamentation;
cast tin-alloy decorated mirrors,
now dark, now bright,
rubbed minutely, every flaw removed;
frost patterns and deep-cut inlay work,
resembling bamboo matwork, basketry, or netting,
or brocade wrappings, regular or irregular,
the lines numerous but each one distinct:
Such is profligate indolence based on metal.
Frying, boiling, roasting, grilling,
the quest to blend, equalize, and harmonize [flavors],
trying to capture every permutation of sweet and sour in the manner of Jing and Wu;
burning down forests in order to hunt,
stoking kilns with entire logs,
blowing through *tuyères* and puffing with bellows
in order to melt bronze and iron
that extravagantly flow to harden in the mold,
not considering an entire day sufficient to the task.

The mountains are denuded of towering trees;
the forests are stripped of cudrania and catalpa trees;
tree trunks are baked to make charcoal;
grass is burned to make ash,
[so that] open fields and grasslands are white and bare
and do not yield [vegetation] in season.
Above, the heavens are obscured [by smoke];
below, the fruits of the earth are extinguished:
Such is profligate indolence based on fire.

Of these five, [even] one is sufficient for [a ruler] to lose control of the world.

For this reason, in ancient times the making of the Mingtang was such that
below, mud and dampness should not rise up [in the walls];
above, drizzle and fog should not enter into [the building];
and on all four sides, the wind should not come in.
The earthen [walls] were not patterned;
the woodwork was not carved;
the metal fittings were not ornamented.
Clothing [was made] with untrimmed corners and seams;
hats were designed without fancy corners and folds.
The [Ming]tang was sufficiently large for the movement of [those who] arranged the liturgies;
it was sufficiently quiet and clean for sacrifices to the high gods and for ceremonies [directed at] the spirits and deities.
This was to show forth to the people knowledge, simplicity, and economy.

8.12

In ancient times, the Son of Heaven had his royal domain, and the Lords of the Land each had the same [domains as called for by their rank]; each took care of his own portion, and none was permitted to usurp another. If there was one who did not follow the kingly Way,
who was cruel and oppressive to the masses,
who fought over land and tried to usurp territory,
who disrupted the government and violated prohibitions,
who when summoned [to the king's court] would not come,
who when given commands would not carry them out,
who when forbidden [things] would not desist,

who when admonished would not alter,
then [the Son of Heaven] raised an army and went forth to punish him,
executing the prince,
getting rid of his supporters,
shutting his ancestral tombs,
sacrificing at their altars of the soil,
[and] then selecting by divination one of his sons or grandsons to replace him.

But in later ages, [rulers]
endeavored to enlarge their lands and encroach on the territory of others, forming alliances ceaselessly,
raised armies for unrighteous causes and mounted punitive expenditions against the guiltless;
killed innocent people and cut off the lineages of the former sages.
Large countries set off to attack [others];
small countries built fortifications to defend themselves.
[Such rulers] confiscated people's oxen and horses,
took captive their sons and daughters,
destroyed their ancestral temples,
carried off their weighty treasures,
[so that] streams of blood flowed for a thousand *li*,
and sun-bleached skeletons choked the wild lands.
To satisfy the desires of greedy lords—this is not how armies should be managed.

Now the purpose of armies is to punish cruelty, not too commit cruelties.
The purpose of music is to bring forth concord [in human relations], not to create licentiousness.
The purpose of mourning is to bring about a consummation of grief not to create what is meretricious.
Thus,
there is a Way of serving close relations, and love is thee principal means off serving them.
There is substance in the [rituals of] attendance at court, and respect is its highest expression.
There are rituals for the implementation of mourning, and grief is their principal quality.

There are techniques for the use of arms, and Rightness is their foundation.
If the foundation is established, then the Way can bee implemented;
if the foundation is harmed, then the Way will be abandoned.

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1. The office of “hegemon” was, according to later historical accounts, held in succession by several rulers of large states during the Spring and Autumn period (722–481 B.C.E.). The hegemon was recognized by his fellow rulers as a “first among equals” who wielded authority on behalf of the reigning Zhou king (the Zhou monarchy having, by then, become nearly powerless) to maintain peace and order among the states.

Nine

THE RULER'S TECHNIQUES

"The Ruler's Techniques" [addresses] the affairs of the ruler of humankind. It provides the means by which to adapt tasks [to individuals] and scrutinize responsibilities so as to ensure that each of the numerous officials exerts his abilities exhaustively. [It] illuminates

how to wield authority and manage the handles of governance
and thereby regulate the multitudes below;
how to match official titles with actual performance
and investigate them [with the techniques of] threes and fives.

It is what enables the ruler of men to

grasp techniques and sustain essentials
and not act recklessly based on happiness or anger.

Its techniques

straighten the bent and correct the crooked,
set aside self-interest and establish the public good,

enabling the one hundred officials to communicate in an orderly fashion

and gather around the ruler like the spokes of a wheel,
each exerting his utmost in his respective task,
while the people succeed in their accomplishments.

Such is the brilliance of the ruler's techniques.

"An Overview of the Essentials" (21.2)

"The Ruler's Techniques" begins by stating: "The ruler's techniques [consist of] establishing non-active management and carrying out wordless instructions." This serves notice that the chapter is not a handbook of tips and tricks for an energetic bureaucrat but a comprehensive plan for achieving the kind of effective self-cultivation, charismatic appeal, and radiant moral force required for a person to be a true universal monarch, a "Son of Heaven." The ruler's non-active orientation is made possible by time-tested techniques that have proved efficacious in creating a harmonious and just society in which the common people flourish and

officials support their ruler as spokes of a wheel joined to the hub. The ruler's ability to instruct and yet remain silent as he does so lies in the wondrous power of vital energy (*qi*), which, through selfcultivation, he possesses in quintessential form. By means of this Quintessential *qi*, which in its most refined state is referred to in this chapter interchangeably as the "Utmost Essence" or "spirit," the ruler can avail himself of the Way of Heaven above and transform the people below. In this manner, the ruler achieves a kind of profound and pervasive resonance with his subjects. Stirring their hearts as a fine melody would, such "wordless instructions" are infinitely more persuasive, far-reaching, and influential than any verbal command or purposeful act could be.

True to the *Huainanzi*'s claim to synthesize the best of all previous schools of thought, "The Ruler's Techniques" draws on a very wide range of pre-Han and early Han statecraft literature. Significantly, while it is possible to find in this chapter numerous parallels and allusions to such works as the *Laozi*, the *Hanfeizi*, the *Xunzi*, the *Lüshi chunqiu*, and the *Guanzi*, direct quotations from those works are relatively rare, and "The Ruler's Techniques" clearly represents a new synthesis rather than a simple rehash of old ideas.

This is the longest chapter in the *Huainanzi*, and it is also one of the most wide-ranging. Topics addressed include non-action, positional advantage, sincerity, Potency and Moral Potency, following the natural propensity of things, and laws, taxes, officials, and administrative methods, among others —all of which fall under the capacious rubric of "techniques."

Nine

9.1

The ruler's techniques [consist of]
establishing non-active management
and carrying out wordless instructions.
Quiet and tranquil, he does not move;
by [even] one degree he does not waver;
adaptive and compliant, he relies on his underlings;
dutiful and accomplished, he does not labor.
Therefore,
though his mind knows the norms, his savants transmit the discourses of the Way;
though his mouth can speak, his entourage proclaims his words;
though his feet can advance, his master of ceremonies leads;
though his ears can hear, his officials offer their admonitions.[1]
Therefore,
his considerations are without mistaken schemes;
his undertakings are without erroneous content.
His words [are taken as] scripture and verse;
his conduct is [taken as] a model and gnomon for the world.
His advancing and withdrawing respond to the seasons;
his movement and rest comply with [proper] patterns.
His likes and dislikes are not based on ugliness or beauty;
his rewards and punishments are not based on happiness or anger.
Each name names itself;
each category categorizes itself.
Affairs emerge from what is natural;
nothing issues from [the ruler] himself.
Thus kings in antiquity wore caps
with strings of pearls in front so as to mask their vision
and silk plugs in their ears so as to obstruct their hearing.

The Son of Heaven surrounded himself with screens so as to isolate himself.
Thus,
what the ruler patterns himself on is far away, but what he grounds himself in is nearby;
what he governs himself with is great, but what he preserves is small.
Now,
if his eyes looked recklessly, there would be profligacy;
if his ear listened recklessly, there would be delusion;
if his mouth spoke recklessly, there would be disorder.
One cannot fail to guard carefully these three gateways.
If you wish to regulate them, that is in fact to distance yourself from them;
if you wish to embellish them, that is in fact to injure them.

9.2

Heavenly *qi* becomes your ethereal soul;
earthly *qi* becomes your substantive soul.
Return them to their mysterious dwelling place, so that each resides in its proper place.
Preserve and do not lose them, so that above you communicate with the Grand One, for the essence of the Grand One communicates with Heaven,
and the Way of Heaven is mysterious and silent, shapeless and without pattern.
Heaven's limit cannot be reached;
its depths cannot be plumbed.
Still it transforms together with humans, [though] knowledge cannot grasp it.

9.10

Now,
for boats to float on water
and carts to go on land
is their natural propensity. If
a carriage hits a tree and breaks an axle,
or if a boat runs aground and shatters the hull,

there is no reason for people to bear resentment against the tree or the rock; they will blame the lack of skill [of the carriage driver or the boatman]. They know that [trees and stones] possess no [conscious qualities]. Thus

when the Way includes wisdom, there is confusion;
when Potency includes the mind, there is danger;
when the mind includes the eyes, there is bedazzlement.

No weapon is more powerful than awareness and the will. Even the great sword Moye is inferior to them.[2]

No brigand is as strong as yin and yang. The drumsticks and drums [signaling attack] are inferior to them.

Now the weight and the balance beam, the compass and the square, once fixed do not change.

Their calibrations are not altered for the sake of Qin or Chu;
their form does not change for the Hu or the Yue [tribes].

Constant and unswerving, going straight and not meandering, taking form in a single day and passed down for ten thousand generations, they act through non-action.

Thus,

states have rulers who perish, but no era can see the destruction of the Way.

People have distress and poverty, but principles never fail to be passed on.

From this standpoint, non-action is the Ancestor of the Way. Attaining the Ancestor of the Way, one responds to things without limit. When one relies [merely] on human talents, the highest kind of statecraft is difficult.

9.23

Law is the standard of measurement for the world, the level and the marking cord of the ruler.

[He who] proclaims the laws does so to [impose] law on the lawless;
[he who] sets up rewards does so to reward those who deserve rewards.

After the laws are set,

those who obey the laws are rewarded,
and those who fall short of the marking cord[’s line] are punished.
For the honorable and noble, the punishments are not decreased,
and for the lowly and base, the punishments are not increased.

If someone disobeys the law, even if he is [otherwise] worthy, he must be punished.

If someone meets the standard, even if he is [otherwise] unworthy, he must be found innocent.

Thus the Way of the public good will be opened up, and that of private interest will be blocked.

In ancient times,

a system of responsible officials was established so as to restrain the people and thus prevent them from doing just as they pleased.

The position of ruler was set up to control the officials so that they could not carry out [policy] on their own.

Laws, records, propriety, and Rightness were used to restrain the ruler so that he could not exercise absolute authority.

When none of the people could blindly follow their own desires, the Way was triumphant.

When the Way was triumphant, Patterns were apparent.

Thus government returned to non-action. Non-action does not mean [that the ruler] froze and was inert but that nothing any longer emanated from the ruler personally.

Now the inch comes from the millet grain; the millet grain comes from physical forms. Physical forms come from shadows; shadows come from the sun. This is the root of standards of measurement.

Music comes from the [pentatonic] notes; the notes come from the pitchpipe tones; and the pitch-pipe tones come from the wind. This is the ancestry of sound.

Law comes from Rightness. Rightness comes from what is appropriate for the people. What is appropriate for the people accords with the human heart. This is the sine qua non of government.

Thus,

those who penetrate to the root are not confused about the branches.

Those who see the fundamental are not confused about the details.

Law is

not a gift of Heaven,

not a product of Earth.

It was devised by humankind but conversely is used [by humans] to rectify themselves. Thus,

what you have in yourself you must not criticize in others;

what you lack in yourself you must not seek in others;
what is established for inferiors must not be disregarded by superiors;
what is prohibited to the people must not be practiced by [the ruler] himself.

A country that can be said to be lost is not one without a ruler but one without laws.

To twist the law does not mean to have no laws [at all] but, rather, that the laws are not employed. That is equivalent to not having laws. Thus when the ruler first establishes laws, he begins by making himself an example and a standard; thus the laws are implemented in the world. Confucius said,

"If the ruler himself is upright, even though he does not issue orders, they are carried out;
if he is not upright, though he issue orders, they are not followed."

Thus when the prohibitions apply to [even the ruler] himself, then his orders will be carried out among the people.

9.26

Holding on to the handles of authority and positional advantage makes it easy to transform the people.

That the ruler of Wey took into service [Confucius's disciple] Zilu was because [the ruler's] authority was heavy.
That Dukes Jing and Huan of Qi made ministers of Guan Zhong and Yan Ying was because [the rulers'] positions were exalted.
That [sometimes]
the timid can subdue the brave
and the unintelligent can control the wise

is because they can use positional advantage successfully. Now,

the limbs of a tree cannot be larger than its trunk,
the stem cannot be stronger than the root.

So it is said that light and heavy, large and small, have that by which they mutually control each other. It is like the way the five fingers are attached to the arm. They can grasp, extend, snatch, or grab, and none [happens] other than as we wish it. This is to say, the small are appendages of the large. Thus to have the benefit of positional advantage means that what you hold is very small but what you manage is very large; what you guard is very compact, but what you control is vast. Thus a tree trunk ten [hand] spans [in

circumference] can support a roof weighing a thousand *jun*, and a key five inches long can control the opening and closing [of a door]. How can this small amount of material be sufficient for the task? The position they occupy is the important thing.

Confucius and Mo Di cultivated the techniques of the former sages and had a penetrating understanding of the theories of the six arts. Their utterances adhered to their doctrines, and their personal actions embodied their will. [Yet] those who, admiring their Rightness and following their influence, submitted to them and served them did not amount to more than a few tens of individuals. But if they had occupied the position of Son of Heaven, everyone in the world would have become Confucians or Mohists.

King Zhuang of Chu was distressed because Wen Wuwei was killed in [the state of] Song. He pushed up his sleeves in anger and arose [to invade Song]. [Officials] in robes and caps fell in with him at every stage along the road so that at last they formed a whole army beneath the walls of Song. [His grasp of] the handles of authority was weighty.

King Wen of Chu liked to wear a cap of *xie* fur,[3] and the people of Chu imitated him. King Wuling of Zhao attended court wearing a belt [decorated with] shells and a cap [plumed] with pheasant feathers, and the [entire] state of Zhao transformed [their dress] along with him. Yet if an ordinary person were to go to court wearing a *xie* -fur hat, a belt of shells, and a cap [plumed] with pheasant feathers, he could not avoid being laughed at by others.

There is not one in ten thousand among the common people who loves goodness, rejoices in uprightness, and, without waiting to hear what is forbidden or punishable, naturally stays within the scope of the laws and standards. But if [the ruler] hands down commands that must be followed, so that those who obey them benefit and those who disobey them suffer, then before the sun [dial's] shadow has moved, no one within the Four Seas will fail to toe the line.

Thus, grasping a sword or a glaive by the blade and [advancing to fight] —not even Beigongzi or Sima Kuaikui could be used to respond to an enemy attack [in that manner]. But if he were to grasp the hilt and raise the tip of the blade, then even an ordinary person might prevail. If [even] Wu Huo [or Jie Fan] were to pull on an ox's tail from behind, even though the tail might break off, still the ox would not go where they wanted it to [because] that would be working against [its natural propensities]. But if

you put a mulberry stick through [the ox's] nose, even a five-foot-tall child could lead it anywhere within the Four Seas, [because] that would be complying with [its natural propensities].

With a seven-foot oar you can steer a boat to the right or to the left because it uses the water [itself] to assist it. The Son of Heaven issues commands. His orders are implemented and his prohibitions observed because he uses the people [themselves] as his positional advantage.

If the ruler defends the people against what does them harm and opens [a way] for the people to have what brings them benefit, then his awesomeness will spread like the bursting of a dike or the breaking of a dam. Thus if you follow the current and head downstream, it is easy to reach your goal; if you gallop with your back to the wind, it is easy to go far.

When Duke Huan of Qi set up his government, he got rid of meat-eating animals, [got rid of] grain-eating birds, and took down snares and nets. With these three undertakings, he pleased the common people.

When [Tyrant] Djou murdered his uncle, Prince Bi Gan, his blood relatives grew resentful. When he cut off the legs of people who were crossing the river in the early morning, tens of thousands of people rebelled. With these two undertakings, he lost the world.

> Now,
>
> [a ruler's] Rightness cannot be relied on to benefit everyone in the world, but if it benefits one person, the world will follow his example.
>
> [A ruler's] cruelty might not be enough to harm everyone in the world, but if it harms one person, the whole world might rise in rebellion.
>
> Thus,
>
> Duke Huan made three undertakings and [subsequently presided over] nine gatherings of the Lords of the Land.
>
> Djou performed two undertakings, and [subsequently] he could not live even as a commoner. Thus one cannot but be careful of one's actions.

9.27

When the ruler levies taxes on the people, he must first calculate what the harvest will bring in, weigh what the people have in storage, and find out, [in anticipation of] abundance or dearth, the numbers of people who have a surplus or a shortage. Only after this should he use [tax revenues to pay for] chariots, carriages, clothing, and food to satisfy his desires.

High terraces and multistoried pavilions, serried rooms, and linked chambers—it is not that they are not elegant, but when the people do not even have hollowed-out caves or wattle huts in which to shelter themselves, an enlightened ruler does not enjoy them.

Rich [food], strong wines, and sweet pastries—it is not that they are not good, but when not even husks of the grain or beans and peas make it to the mouths of the people, then the enlightened ruler does not find [such delicacies] sweet.

A well-made bed and finely woven mats—it is not that these are not restful, but when the people live in frontier walled towns, braving danger and hardship, dying in the meadowlands [leaving] sun-bleached bones, an enlightened ruler does not [lie] peacefully [in his fine bed].

Thus those who ruled over humanity in antiquity felt such sorrowful despondency for [the troubles of] the people that

> if some went hungry in the state, his food would not be heavily seasoned;
>
> if some people were cold, in winter he would not wear furs.

When the harvest was abundant and the people prosperous, only then would the ruler set up the bells and drums and display the shields and axes [used in ceremonial dances]. Ruler and ministers, superiors and subordinates, then with one mind took pleasure in them, so that there was not a single sorrowful person in the state.

Thus people in ancient times created

> [instruments of] metal, stone, bamboo, and strings to express their joy;[4]
>
> weapons, armor, axes, and halberds to display their anger;
>
> wine cups and libations, [sacrificial] meat stands and platters, pledges and toasts, to verify their happiness;
>
> unbleached mourning garments and straw sandals, breast-beating and gyrating, crying and weeping, to communicate sorrow.

These all are cases of things that swell up internally and then become manifest externally. [But] coming down to [the times of] disorderly rulers,

> in taking from the people, they did not calculate their strength;
>
> in seeking [taxes] from those below, they did not measure their savings.

Men and women were not able to pursue their callings of farming and weaving because they had to supply the demands of their superiors. Their

strength was exhausted and their resources were depleted. Rulers and ministers despised one another. Thus [if just when] the people reached the point that, with parched lips and agitated livers, they had only enough for the moment with nothing put aside, the rulers began to have the great bells struck, the drums beaten, the reed pipes played, and the *qin* and *se* plucked, it would have been just like descendants donning armor to enter the ancestral temple or wearing silk gauze to go on a military campaign. [One could say that] they had lost sight of that from whence joy in music rises.

Now as people pursue their livelihoods, if a single man follows the plow, he can till no more than ten *mu* of land. The yearly harvest from fields of middling quality would not exceed four *dan* per *mu.* His wife and children and the elderly and infirm must also rely on this. Sometimes there are diverse calamities such as floods, droughts, and natural disasters. He also has to pay the taxes to the ruler for the expenses of chariots and horses, and soldiers and armor. From this point of view, the life of commoners is pitiful indeed! Now over the great [expanse] of Heaven and Earth, [on average] a three-year period of farming should produce a surplus of one year's grain. Thus roughly

over nine years, there should be three years' savings,
six years' accumulation in eighteen years,
and nine years' reserve in twenty-seven years.

Even if there were floods, droughts, or natural disasters, none of the people would become distressed and impoverished and be left to wander about in utter destitution.

Thus if the state does not have

a reserve of nine years' production, it is called "insufficient."
Without six years' accumulation, it is called "pitiful."
Without three years' surplus, it is called "impoverished."

Thus humane princes and enlightened rulers are restrained in what they take from those below; they are measured in supporting themselves. As a result, the people can receive the bounty of Heaven and Earth and not encounter the difficulties of hunger and cold. But if there are greedy rulers and violent princes, they vex those below, plundering and confiscating [goods] from the people to gratify their insatiable desires. Consequently, the people have no means to avail themselves of Heaven's Harmony or tread the path of Earth's Bounty.

9.29

Generally people say that you want

your heart to be small [cautious] and your will to be large [expansive];
your wisdom to be round [comprehensive] and your conduct square [proper];
your abilities to be many and your affairs few.

"The heart should be cautious" means that you should consider difficulties before they arise, prepare for calamities before they occur, guard against transgressions and be careful about small matters, and not dare to give rein to your desires.

"The will should be expansive" means that you should bring together and embrace the myriad states, unify and standardize diverse customs, ally and shelter the commoners as if uniting them as a single people, and act as the hub when [opinions about] right and wrong converge like the spokes of a wheel.

"Wisdom should be round" means that you turn like a circle with no distinction between beginning and end, and flow to the four directions like a deep and inexhaustible spring. When the myriad things arise together, there is nothing to which you fail to turn your attention and respond.

"Conduct should be square" means that you should be straight and unswerving, pure and uncorrupted. Even if you are destitute, you never change your patterns, and when successful, you never force your will [on others].

"Abilities should be many" means that you must be competent in both civil and military matters, and adhere to proper deportment both in movement and at rest. In your actions, in promoting and demoting, you always do what is appropriate. You meet with no opposition, and so nothing is incomplete or inappropriate.

"Affairs should be few" means that you grasp the handles and wield the techniques [of governance], get what is important so as to respond to the multitudes, grasp the essence so as to govern widely, dwell in quietude and stay centered, revolve at the pivot, and use the one to bring together the myriads, like bringing together [the two halves of] a tally.

Thus,

if your heart is cautious, you can put a stop [to problems] in their incipient stages.
If your will is great, there will be nothing you do not embrace.
If your knowledge is round, there will be nothing you do not know.

If your conduct is square, you will not act in certain instances.
If your abilities are many, there will be nothing you cannot put in order.
If your affairs are few, the essence will be what you grasp.
In ancient times when the Son of Heaven held court, he arranged for
lords and ministers to present forthright admonitions,
scholars of wide learning to chant the *Odes*,
music masters to sing critiques of government,
and the populace to offer their opinions.
Secretaries recorded the ruler's misconduct;
chefs cut down on his delicacies.

But still this was not considered sufficient, so

Yao put in place a drum [at the palace gate] for anyone wishing to admonish [him];
Shun set up a board on which to post criticisms;
Tang had a superintendent of rectitude;
King Wu set up a small drum to remind him to be careful.

[Thus], when mistakes were still trivial, there already were precautions taken against them.

According to the sage's concept of goodness, no act [of goodness] is so small that it should not be carried out.
According to his concept of misconduct, no act [of misconduct] is so trivial that it should not be corrected.

Yao, Shun, Yu, Tang, King Wen and King Wu confidently faced south and ruled the world. In those times,

when a gong was struck, they ate;
when the [musical composition] "Concord" was played, the table was cleared.

After finishing their rice, they offered a sacrifice to the stove god. In their conduct, they did not make use of shamans' invocations.

Ghosts and spirits did not dare to work black magic on them;
mountains and rivers did not dare to harm them.

They could be said to be [truly] noble. Yet they were

preoccupied and fearful,
daily more and more careful.

From this point of view, then, the sage's heart is cautious. The *Odes* says,

"Indeed this King Wen

was cautious and reverent;
illustriously he served the High God,
thus securing good fortune."

Is this not what is referred to here?

When King Wu of Zhou attacked the Shang dynasty, he
disbursed the grain from the Zhuqiao granaries,
distributed the money from the Lutai treasury,
built a mound over Bi Gan's tomb,
designated as exemplary the [ancestral] village of Shang Rong,
brought under royal control the ancestral temple of Cheng Tang,
and freed Ji Zi from prison.

He let people of all sorts remain in their own homes and till their own fields.

He did not distinguish between old and new [friends]
but drew near only to those who were worthy.
He made use of those who had not previously served him
and employed those who were not [previously] his own men,

comfortably treating the newcomers as if they had long been in his employ. From this point of view, then, the sage's will is expansive.

King Wen of Zhou
comprehensively surveyed successes and failures
and everywhere investigated right and wrong.
[He considered] what made Yao and Shun glorious
and [why] Jie and Djou perished,

then recorded all [his findings] in the Mingtang. Thereby he increased his wisdom and expanded his erudition so he could respond to anything that departed from the foursquare. From this point of view, then, the sage's wisdom is round.

King Cheng and King Kang
carried on the task of Kings Wen and Wu,
preserved the institution of the Mingtang,
looked into the traces of [ancient states] that endured or perished,
and observed the alterations of success and failure.

If something

contravened the Way, they would not say it;
contravened Rightness, they would not do it.
Their words were not spoken heedlessly;

their actions were not carried out heedlessly.
They selected what was good, and only then would they pursue a course of action. From this point of view, then, the conduct of the Superior Man is square.

Confucius's penetrating qualities [were such that]
in wisdom he surpassed Chang Hong;
in bravery he was superior to Meng Ben.
His feet were quicker than an agile rabbit;
his strength could lift a city gate.

His abilities certainly were many. Nevertheless,
his bravery and strength were not heard about;
his skills and mastery were not known.

It was only through carrying out filial piety and the Way that he became an "uncrowned king." His affairs certainly were few.

In the 242 years of the Spring and Autumn period, fifty-two states perished and thirty-six rulers were assassinated. Confucius
upheld goodness and condemned wickedness, [thereby]
perfecting the Way of [the True] King.

His discussions certainly were broad. Nevertheless,
when he was besieged in Kuang,
his expression and complexion did not alter.
He plucked [his *qin*] and sang without pausing.
When it came to the point that his life was in danger,
when he encountered calamities and dangerous difficulties,

he clung to Rightness and practiced his principles, and his will was fearless. His sense of discrimination [between life and death] certainly was clear.

Thus, [in serving] as minister of justice in Lu, when he heard cases, he invariably came to a decision. In compiling the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, he did not give accounts of ghosts and spirits, nor did he dare to [inject] his personal opinions.

Now the wisdom of sages certainly embraces many things; what they preserve gets to the essence. Thus when they take some action, the outcome is invariably glorious. The wisdom of a foolish person certainly is very little, yet the things he tries to do are numerous. Thus when he acts on something it is certain to fail. In wisdom, Wu Qi and Zhang Yi did not compare with Confucius and Mo Di, yet they contended with rulers of ten-

thousand-chariot states. This is why they eventually had their bodies torn apart by chariots and their lineages wiped out. Now

> if [the ruler] uses uprightness to transform [the people] by teaching, that is easy and he will certainly succeed.
>
> If he uses depravity to manipulate society, that is difficult and he will certainly fail.

Now, if you are going to establish a pattern of conduct and make it general throughout the world, to abandon the easy route that is sure to succeed and to follow the difficult way that is bound to fail would be the height of stupidity and confusion.

The six opposites must, without fail, be scrutinized carefully.

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1. Because this sentence breaks the parallelism of the whole passage, we suspect that the text might have originally read, "his officials receive the admonitions [of others]."
2. The precious sword Moye, mentioned several times in the *Huainanzi*, took its name from Mo Ye, wife of the legendary swordsmith Gan Jiang and herself a superlatively skilled smith.
3. The *xie* is identified as a mythical single-horned bovine animal said to be able to distinguish between people who told the truth and those who did not. A cap supposedly made from the animal's fur was popular for a time in Chu and was adapted for use at the Qin court.
4. Here "joy" includes the concept of "music." Both words are written with the same character, which means "joy" when pronounced *le* and "music" when pronounced *yue*.

Ten

PROFOUND PRECEPTS

"Profound Precepts"
parses and analyzes [various] assessments of the Way and its Potency,
ranks and puts in sequence [diverse] differentiations of Humaneness and Rightness,
summarizes and juxtaposes the affairs of the human realm,
generally bringing them into conformity with the Potency of spirit illumination.
It proposes similes and selects appositions
to match them with analogies and illustrations;
it divides into segments and forms sections
to respond to brief aphorisms.
It is what makes it possible to find fault with persuasions and attack arguments, responding to provocations without error.

"An Overview of the Essentials" (21.2)

"Profound Precepts" posits that the ruler must follow the promptings of his inner heart and honor his innermost feelings as the basis of his rule, rather than relying on laws, rituals, institutions, or the advice of worthies. "Profound Precepts" thus evinces a deep commitment to concepts of moral autonomy and moral agency. In turn, these echo the radical optimism of the celebrated Confucian philosopher Mencius, who centuries earlier had argued passionately for the power of human emotions to uplift the world. The ideal ruler accordingly seeks goodness within himself and thereby brings goodness to the world. He is able to do so because the intrinsic moral inclinations of his heart, expressed in such feelings as Humaneness and Rightness, are shared by all humanity. Guided by his own feelings, he is able to connect in a profound way with his people, leading them by means of a kind of empathetic resonance that is more powerful than any commands he might utter. Through vigilant introspection, the ruler establishes a close communion with the stirrings of his inner heart, relying on his personal Humaneness and Rightness to establish a government under

which the people are loved and benefited as a father loves his son. Ruler and ruled are in perfect accord, and by cultivating his inherent feelings, the ruler sets the world in order.

Transcending ordinary human emotions—such as sorrow, joy, happiness, and anger—for a deeper level of inner experience, sage rulers respond to others with a profound sense of equanimity and transform the hearts of the people by projecting the moral force of their deeply rooted feelings. Much of this chapter outlines how human resonance works, demonstrating the central importance of the human heart and how its feelings evoke sympathetic and resonant responses from others. Of particular relevance is the concept of inner sincerity, an emotion identified with a person's deepest psychic self. In this chapter, it is portrayed as preceding speech and actions and enabling the expression of other emotions.

Of all the chapters in the *Huainanzi*, chapter 10 may fairly be called the most strongly Confucian in orientation. It draws its ideas and themes (although seldom its exact language) from the whole pre-Han and early Han Confucian corpus, including the *Lunyu* (*Analects of Confucius*), the *Liji* (*Record of Rites*), the *Mengzi* (*The Book of Mencius*), the *Zisizi* (*The Book of Master Zisi*), the *Zhong yong* (*Doctrine of the Mean*, chapter 32 of the *Liji*), and the archaeologically recovered text the *Wuxingpian* (*The Five Kinds of Conduct*). The chapter's title, "Profound Precepts," refers to both its content and literary form. Most of the 118 brief moral assertions are followed by a few lines of explication. Such "precepts" would be well suited for use in various oral contexts (such as court debates) to argue against false opinions, precisely as the summary in chapter 21 suggests.

Ten

10.1

The Way at its highest has nothing above it;
at its lowest it has nothing below it.
It is more even than a [carpenter's] level,
straighter than a marking cord,
rounder than a compass,
and more square than a [carpenter's] square.

It embraces the cosmos and is without outside or inside. Cavernous and undifferentiated, it covers and supports with nothing to hinder it.

Therefore, those who embody the Way
are not sorrowful or joyful;
are not happy or angry.
They sit without disturbing thoughts,
and sleep without dreams.
Things come, and they name them.
Affairs arise, and they respond to them.

10.5

The Way is what guides things;
Potency is what supports nature.

Humaneness is visible proof of accumulated kindness. Rightness is what comports with the human heart and conforms to what is appropriate for the majority of humankind.

Thus
when the Way was extinguished, Potency was employed.
When Potency declined, Humaneness and Rightness were born.

Thus
the earliest era embodied the Way but did not have Potency.
The middle period had Potency but did not cherish it.

The latter-day era was anxious and fearful lest even Humaneness and Rightness be lost.

10.6

If not for Humaneness and Rightness, the Superior Man would have nothing to live for.
If he loses Humaneness and Rightness, he will lose the reason for his existence.
If not for cravings and desires, the petty man would have nothing to live for.
If he loses his cravings and desires, he will lose his reason for living.

Thus

the Superior Man fears losing Rightness.
The petty man fears losing what is valuable to him.

When we look at what people fear, we understand how different they are.

The *Changes* says,

"Chasing a deer without a guide.
It goes into the forest.
For the Superior Man to follow it would not be so good as to abandon it.
Should he follow it, he would encounter difficulty."

10.10

When the Superior Man sees [the ruler's] transgressions, he forgets about punishment [for pointing it out]. Thus he is able to remonstrate.
When he sees a worthy, he forgets about [the worthy's low] rank. Thus he is able to yield modestly.
When he sees others who do not have enough, he forgets [his own] poverty. Thus he is able to give charitably.

10.16

There is nothing that does not have some use.

Tianxiong and *wuhui* are the [most] virulently poisonous of herbs, but a good physician uses them to save people's lives.
Dwarves and blind musicians are the troubled invalids of humankind, but the ruler of men uses them to perform music.

For this reason, the sage prepares even the shavings from the timber. There is nothing that he does not use.

10.17

With one shout, a brave warrior can cause the Three Armies to retreat. What disperses them is his complete sincerity.

Thus

> if you command, but [the troops] do not [comply] harmoniously;
> if you have intentions, but [the troops] do not support you,

it surely is the case that something is not in accord with your inner heart.

Thus the reason that Shun, without descending from his mat, [was able to] preserve the world was because he sought it within himself. Thus if the ruler makes more and more excuses, the people will practice more and more deceit. To have a body that is crooked and a shadow that is straight—such a thing has never been heard of.

10.24

> The essence of the heart can transform [others] like a spirit, but it cannot point out things to them.
> The essence of the eye can cut through obscurities, but it cannot give clear warning.

What lies within the dark and obscure cannot be verbalized to others.
Thus,

> Shun did not descend from his mat, and the world was ordered.
> [The tyrant] Jie did not leave his throne, and the world was disordered.

Certainly, feelings are deeper than spoken commands. To seek from others what one lacks in oneself—such has never been heard of from ancient times to the present.

10.25

> If the speech is identical but the people trust it [in some cases], it is because trust preceded the speech.
> If the command is identical but the people are transformed by it [in some cases], it is because sincerity lay beyond the command.

When sages rule above and the people are moved and transformed, it is because their feelings have paved the way for them. When there is movement above and no response below, it is because feelings and orders are at variance with one another.

Thus the *Changes* says,

"The overbearing dragon will have [reason to] regret."

10.26

A three-month-old infant does not yet understand the distinction between benefit and harm, but the love of a kind mother is conveyed to the infant because of her feelings.

Thus, the usefulness of what is spoken—how manifestly tiny it is!
The usefulness of what is not spoken—how vastly great it is!

10.29

Rightness is more exalted than a ruler.
Humaneness is more intimate than a father.

Thus

the ruler in relation to his ministers [has the power to] kill them or let them live, but he cannot force them to do their jobs with negligent unconcern.
A father in relation to his children [has the power to] reject them or raise them, but he cannot force them to be without anxious concern.

Thus

when Rightness transcends the ruler himself,
and Humaneness transcends the father himself,
the ruler is exalted and his ministers are loyal;
the father is compassionate and his children are filial.

10.31

Actions undertaken near at hand cause a civilizing influence to spread far away. Now when he examined his evening gait, the Duke of Zhou was embarrassed by his shadow.[1]

Thus the Superior Man scrutinizes [himself] in solitude. To abandon what is close at hand in expectation of what is far-off is to obstruct [one's path].

10.42

If you turn to goodness, even if you err, you will not be censured.
If you do not turn to goodness, even if you are loyal, you will invite calamity.

Thus

being censorious toward others is not so good as being censorious toward yourself.
Seeking it [i.e., goodness] in others is not so good as seeking it in yourself.

10.51

The actions of the sage
are not joined with anything
and are not separated from anything.
By analogy, it is like a drum.
There is no instrument that is in tune with it,
and no instrument that cannot be accompanied by it.

10.54

Culture is the means by which we connect to things.
Feelings bind inwardly,
but desires manifest themselves externally.
If you use culture to obliterate feelings, feelings will be lost.
If you use feelings to obliterate culture, culture will be lost.

When the guiding patterns of culture and feelings interpenetrate, the phoenix and the *qilin* will roam extensively. That is to say, the embrace of your Utmost Potency will be far-reaching.

10.56

The ruler wills it.
The people fulfill it.
This is because of his inner sincerity.
Before saying a word, he is trusted;
without being summoned, they come.
Something precedes it.

10.65

The Way of the Superior Man is
close but cannot be attained,
low but cannot be ascended,
contains nothing inside it, but cannot be filled. It is
enduring yet brilliant,

far-reaching yet illustrious.

To understand this and so follow the Way is something that cannot be sought in others but only attained from the self. If you abandon the search within yourself and seek it in others, you will have strayed far from it.

10.79

In an age that has the Way, a man is given to the state.
In an age that does not have the Way, the state is given to a man.

When Yao ruled the world as king, his anxiety did not abate. When he conferred [his rulership] on Shun, his anxiety disappeared. Anxiously he watched over it; joyfully he gave it to a worthy. To the end he did not consider the benefit [of rulership] to be his private possession.

10.83

The sprouts of good fortune are flossy and fine,
and the birth of bad fortune is tiny and trifling.

Since the beginnings of good and bad fortune are tiny as a sprout, people overlook them. Only sages see their beginnings and know their ends.

Thus a chronicle says,

"The wine of Lu was weak and Handan was surrounded;
the lamb broth was not poured, and the state of Song was endangered."[2]

10.87

One whose Rightness includes a sense of appropriateness is called a Superior Man.
One whose appropriateness abandons a sense of Rightness is called a petty man.

Penetrating wisdom achieves [its goals] without exertion;
the next best kind exerts itself without becoming worn out;
the lowest kind becomes worn out without exerting itself.
Men of antiquity tasted [the food offered in sacrifice] but did not covet it.
Men of today covet [the sacrificial food] but do not care about its taste.

10.101

The Superior Man does not say,

> "Small [acts of] goodness are not important enough to do" and therefore sets them aside. Small [acts of] goodness accumulate to become great goodness.

[He also does not say],

> "Small [acts of] misconduct do not do any harm" and therefore does them.
>
> Small [acts of] misconduct accumulate to become great misconduct.

For the same reason,

> a pile of feathers can sink a boat;
>
> lots of light things can break an axle.

Thus the Superior Man observes prohibitions [even] regarding minutiae.

10.102

> A single pleasing act is not sufficient to constitute goodness. Accumulate pleasing acts and they become Moral Potency.
>
> A single hateful act is not sufficient to constitute wrong. Accumulate hateful acts and they will become evil.

Thus

> the [reputation for] goodness of the Three Dynasties [Xia, Shang, and Zhou] [reflects] the accumulated praise of a thousand years;
>
> the [reputation for] evil of Jie and Djou [reflects] the accumulated condemnation of a thousand years.

10.106

The Superior Man is sincere in Humaneness.

> When he acts, it is out of Humaneness;
>
> when he does not act, it is also out of Humaneness.

The petty man is sincere in his own inhumaneness.

> When he acts, it is out of inhumaneness;
>
> when he does not act, it is [also] out of inhumaneness.

[Someone whose] goodness comes from the self, rather than coming from others, is [a person] in whom Humaneness and Moral Potency flourish.

Thus,

> if your feelings overcome your desires, you will flourish.
>
> If your desires overcome your feelings, you will perish.

10.111

Good fortune is born of non-action;
bad fortune is born of many desires.
Harm stems from not preparing;
weeds stem from not hoeing.

Sages do good as if afraid they will not attain it; they prepare against disaster as if afraid they cannot avoid it.

10.113

The sage does not seek praise, nor does he avoid condemnation. He corrects his person and acts with rectitude, and the various evils dissipate of their own accord.

Now were he to

abandon rectitude and follow the crooked,
turn his back on truth and follow the crowd,

this would be to consort with the vulgar and to internalize acting without standards. Thus the sage reverts to himself and does not take [the lead from others].

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1. Because he was walking with poor posture, which was a violation of ritual correctness even if there was no one else around to observe it.
2. Both these lines refer to incidents in which minor errors in protocol led to major military confrontations.

Eleven

INTEGRATING CUSTOMS

"Integrating Customs" provides the means by which to
unify the weaknesses and strengths of the various living things,
equate the customs and habits of the nine Yi [tribes],
comprehend past and present discourses,
and thread together the patterns of the myriad things.
[It]
manages and regulates the suitability of Ritual and Rightness
and delineates the ends and beginnings of human affairs.

"An Overview of the Essentials" (21.2)

The title of chapter 11, "Qi su," is strongly evocative of the title of chapter 2 of the *Zhuangzi*, the "Qi wu lun" (On Treating All Things as Equal). Because *Qi* means to "bring together," or "to put on a par," the title of chapter 11 of the *Huainanzi* has been translated as "Equalizing Customs" or "Putting Customs on a Par." Indeed, one of the chapter's main themes is the equivalence of all cultural norms through time and space: the ancient rites of the imperial court are not ultimately more normative than the current folkways of "barbarians" living on the fringe of the empire. As the chapter summary just quoted demonstrates, however, the *Huainanzi* evokes further dimensions of the term *qi*. Just as the Way of the *Zhuangzi* does for all things in the universe, the sage of the *Huainanzi* integrates all customs of the world into a dynamic harmony.

"Integrating Customs" is the *Huainanzi's* focused treatment of the subject of Ritual, a topic that was of urgent importance to statecraft thinkers of the Warring States and early empire. In both ancient Chinese thought and the text of the *Huainanzi*, "Ritual" encompassed all forms of symbolic action from the most austere to the most mundane, ranging from the grand sacrifices of the imperial cult to the small courtesies (such as bowing) that transpired between people at a chance meeting. "Integrating Customs" thus evinces many parallels with the ritual texts of the classical age, especially the *Liji* (*Record of Rites*). The opening lines of "Integrating Customs," for

example, echoes the famous dictum of the *Zhong yong* (*Doctrine of the Mean*, chapter 32 of the *Liji*) that "following nature is called the Way." Both the *Liji* and *Huainanzi* were obviously engaged in a contemporaneous discourse about the nature of ritual, although it is not clear which text was the source for the other.

"Integrating Customs" agrees with Confucian texts like the *Liji* that ritual is an indispensable tool for rulers in the current age, but it breaks from them in viewing ritual as having only contingent rather than ultimate value. At one time, there were sages but no rituals. Now, however, ritual has become necessary to the task of government because the Han live in latter days of decline. Moreover, "Integrating Customs" breaks with the *Liji* in insisting that the current power of ritual does not derive from the wisdom of the sages of antiquity but from the penetrating insight of the sage-ruler of today. Only the monarch whose level of cultivation has given him a perfect reading of the patterns of the cosmos and body politic can fashion rituals appropriate to the current cultural and social conditions of the empire.

Eleven

11.1

Following nature and putting it into practice is called “the Way”;
attaining one’s Heaven[-born] nature is called “Potency.”
Only after nature was lost was Humaneness honored;
only after the Way was lost was Rightness honored.

For this reason,

when Humaneness and Rightness were established, the Way and Potency receded;
when Ritual and Music were embellished, purity and simplicity dissipated.
Right and wrong took form, and the common people were dazzled;
pearls and jade were revered, and the world set to fighting [over them].

These four were the creations of a declining age and are the implements of a latter age.

Now Ritual
distinguishes the revered and the lowly,
differentiates the noble and the base.

Rightness is what unites sovereign and minister, father and son, elder brother and younger brother, husband and wife, friend and friend.

What the current age considers Ritual [demands] reverence and respect yet [causes] jealousy.
What it considers Rightness is boastful and condescending yet [is deemed] potent.

[Because of them,]

ruler and minister oppose each other;
blood kin become resentful of one another.

This is to lose the basis of Ritual and Rightness. Thus [government] is confused and complicated.

When water accumulates, it generates fish that eat one another;
when earth accumulates, it generates beasts that [devour] one another’s flesh;

when Ritual and Rightness are embellished, they generate false and hypocritical scholars.

To blow on ashes yet not to want to get a mote in one's eye,

to wade through water yet not to want to get soaked:

these [things] are impossible.

In antiquity, the people were naive and ignorant, [and] they did not know west from east. The [expressions on] their faces did not exceed their feelings [within], [and] their words did not outstrip their deeds.

Their clothes were warm and without pattern;

their weapons were blunt and had no edge.

Their songs were joyful yet without warbling;

their sobbing was mournful yet without shouting.

They dug wells and drank,

plowed fields and ate.

They had nothing with which to adorn their beauty, nor did they grasp for acquisitions.

Kinsmen did not praise or deprecate one another;

friends did not resent or revere one another.

Upon the creation of Ritual and Rightness and the valuation of goods and wealth, deception and falsehood sprouted, [and] blame and praise proliferated together; resentment and reverence arose in concert. Because of this,

there was the perfection of Zeng Can and Xiao Ji,

the perversity of Robber Zhi and Zhuang Qiao.

Thus where there is the Great Chariot and the Dragon Banner, the feathered canopy and hanging straps, teams of horses and columns of riders, there must be the wickedness of drilling [peep]holes and removing crossbars,[1] digging up graves and climbing over walls. Where there are cunning patterns and complex embroidery, fine cloth and gossamer silk, there must be clomping along in straw sandals and those whose short coats have unfinished hems. Thus it is clear that high and low depend on each other, the short and the long give form to each other.

Now the frog becomes the quail, [and] the water scorpion becomes the dragonfly. These all give rise to what is not of their own kind. Only the sage understands their transformations.

When the Hu [northern "barbarians"] see hemp, they do not understand that it can be used to make cloth.

> When the Yue [southern "barbarians"] see fleece, they do not know that it can be used to make a [felt] rug.

Thus with one who does not comprehend things, it is difficult to discuss transformation.

In ancient times, Grand Duke Wang and Duke Dan of Zhou met with each other after receiving fiefs.

> Grand Duke Wang asked the Duke of Zhou, "How will you govern Lu?"
>
> The Duke of Zhou said, "I will exalt the noble and draw close to my kindred."
>
> The Grand Duke said, "Henceforward Lu will grow weaker!"
>
> The Duke of Zhou asked the Grand Duke, "How will you govern Qi?"
>
> The Grand Duke said, "I will raise up the worthy and promote those of merit."
>
> The Duke of Zhou said, "In later generations, there will certainly be a ruler who rises through assassination."

Afterward, Qi grew daily larger, to the point of becoming hegemon. After twenty-four generations, [the ducal house] was replaced by the Tian clan. Lu grew daily smaller, being destroyed in the thirty-second generation. Thus the *Changes* says,

> "Treading on frost, hard ice descends."

The sages' perception of outcomes at their origin is [truly] subtle! Thus the "mountain of dregs" originated with the use of ivory chopsticks; the "roasting beam" originated with a hot ladle.[2]

11.5

If the original nature of human beings is obstructed and sullied, one cannot get at its purity and clarity—it is because things have befouled it. The children of the Qiang, Dii, Bo, and Dee ["barbarians"] all produce the same sounds at birth. Once they have grown, even with both the *xiang* and *diti* interpreters,[3] they cannot understand one another's speech; this is because their education and customs are different. Now a three-month-old child that moves to a [new] state after it is born will not recognize its old customs. Viewed on this basis, clothing and ritual customs are not [rooted in] people's nature; they are received from without.

> It is the nature of bamboo to float, [but] break it into strips and tie them in a bundle and they will sink when thrown into the water—it

[i.e., the bamboo] has lost its [basic] structure.

It is the nature of metal to sink, [but] place it on a boat and it will float —its positioning lends it support.

The substance of raw silk is white, [but] dye it in potash and it turns black.

The nature of fine silk is yellow, [but] dye it in cinnabar and it turns red.

The nature of human beings has no depravity; having been long immersed in customs, it changes. If it changes and one forgets the root, it is as if [the customs one has acquired] have merged with [one's] nature.

Thus

the sun and the moon are inclined to brilliance, but floating clouds cover them;

the water of the river is inclined to purity, but sand and rocks sully it.

The nature of human beings is inclined to equilibrium, but wants and desires harm it.

Only the sage can leave things aside and return to himself.

Someone who boards a boat and becomes confused, not knowing west from east, will see the Dipper and the Pole Star and become oriented. Nature is likewise a Dipper and a Pole Star for human beings.

If one possesses that by which one can see oneself, then one will not miss the genuine dispositions of things.

If one lacks that by which one can see oneself, then one will be agitated and ensnared.

It is like swimming in Longxi:[4] the more you thrash, the deeper you will sink.

Confucius said to Yan Hui, "I serve you by forgetting [you], and you also serve me by forgetting [me]. Although it is so, even though you forget me, there is still something that has not been forgotten that persists."[5] Confucius understood the root of it.

The actions of one who gives free rein to desires and loses his nature have never been correct.

Controlling one's person [in this way leads to] danger;

controlling a state [in this way leads to] chaos;

leading an army [in this way leads to] destruction.

For this reason, those who have not heard the Way have no means to return to nature. Thus the sage-kings of antiquity were able to attain it in

themselves, and their orders were enacted and their prohibitions were binding. Their names were carried down to later ages, [and] their Potency spread throughout the Four Seas.

11.6

For this reason, whenever one is about to take up an affair, one must first stabilize one's intentions and purify one's spirit.

When the spirit is pure and intentions are stable,
only then can things be aligned.

It is like pressing a seal into clay:

if it is held straight, [the impression] will be straight;
if it is held crookedly, [the impression] will be crooked.

Thus

when Yao chose Shun, he decided simply with his eyes;
when Duke Huan chose Ning Qi, he judged him simply with his ears.

If on this basis one were to give up technique and measurements and rely on one's ears and eyes, the [resulting] chaos would certainly be great. That the ears and eyes can judge is because one returns to feelings and nature.

If one's hearing is lost in slander and flattery
and one's eyes are corrupted by pattern and color,

if one then wants to rectify affairs, it will be difficult.

One who is suffused with grief will cry upon hearing a song;
one suffused with joy will see someone weeping and laugh.
That grief can bring joy
and laughter can bring grief—

being suffused makes it so. For this reason, value emptiness.

When water is agitated, waves rise,
when the *qi* is disordered, the intellect is confused.
A confused intellect cannot attend to government;
agitated water cannot be used to establish a level.

Thus the sage-king holds to the One without losing it, and the genuine dispositions of the myriad things are discovered, the four barbarians and the nine regions all submit. The One is the supremely noble; it has no match in the world. The sage relies on the matchless; thus the mandate of the people attaches itself [to him].

One who practices Humaneness must discuss it [in terms of] grief and joy;

one who practices Rightness must explain it [in terms of] grasping and yielding.

If the human eye does not see beyond ten *li* and one wants to comprehensively reach all people within the [four] seas, grief and joy will not suffice.

If one does not have the amassed wealth of the world and wants to comprehensively supply the myriad people, [material] benefit cannot be enough.

Moreover, pleasure, anger, grief, and joy arise spontaneously from a stimulus.

Thus,

a cry issues from the mouth,
tears flow from the eyes—
all burst forth within
and take form externally.

It is like

water flowing downward
or smoke rising upward:

What compels them? Thus,

though one who forces oneself to cry feels pain, he does not grieve;
though one who forces intimacy will laugh, there is no harmony.

Feelings come forth within, and sounds respond externally. Thus,

the jug of food of Xi Fuji was better than the Chuiji jade of Duke Xian of Jin,

the bound meat-strips of Zhao Xuanmeng were more worthy than the great bell of Earl Zhi.[6]

Thus [though] ritual may be elaborate, it does not suffice for effecting love, yet a sincere heart can embrace [those at] a great distance.

11.8 (in part)

Ritual is the patterning of substance.

Humaneness is the application of kindness.

Thus Rites accord with human feeling and make for them an ordered pattern, and Humaneness bursts forth as a blush that appears in one's countenance.

When Ritual does not surpass substance
and Humaneness does not surpass [the proper degree of] kindness,

this is the Way of ordering the world.

The three-year mourning period[7] forces a person to what he cannot reach; thus he supplements his feelings with pretense.

The three-month observance breaks off grief, coercing and hacking at nature.

The Confucians and the Mohists do not [find the] origin [of their doctrines] in the beginnings and ends of human feelings and are committed to practicing mutually opposed systems [for] the five grades of observance. Sorrow and grief are contained in feelings; burial and interment correspond to nurturing.

Do not force people to do what they are incapable of;
do not interrupt what people are able to complete.

11.9

Rightness is following the patterns and doing what is appropriate;
Ritual is embodying feelings and establishing a design.
Rightness is appropriateness;
Ritual is embodiment.

Of old,

the Youhu clan acted with Rightness and perished; they understood Rightness but did not understand appropriateness.[8]

Lu instituted Rites and was pared down; they understood Rites but not embodiment.

In the rites of Youyu, the altar was made of earth; sacrifices were to the central eaves; the tombs were one *mu* square; his music was the "Pool of Xian," the "Bearing Clouds," and the "Nine Harmonies." His clothing gave prominence to yellow.

The altar of the lords of Xia was made of pine; they sacrificed to the door [god]; their tombs were walled; and their coffins were shrouded. Their music was the nine movements of the "Pipes of Xia," the "Six Dance Troops," the "Six Lines," and the "Six Blossoms." Their clothes gave prominence to green.

In the rites of the Yin [i.e., Shang], their altar was made of stone; they sacrificed to the gate; [and] their tombs were planted with pines. Their music was the "Great Melody" and "Morning Dew." Their clothing gave prominence to white.

In the rites of the Zhou, their altar was made of chestnut; they sacrificed to the stove; their tombs were planted with cypress; their music was the "Grand Martiality," the "Three Elephants," and the "Beneath the Mulberry." Their clothing gave prominence to red.

Their Ritual and Music were contradictory; their clothes and regulations were opposed; yet none lost the affection [appropriate to] kinship and remoteness, the discipline of superior and inferior. Now to seize on one ruler's methods and statutes while rejecting the customs transmitted from ages [past] is like tuning a *se* and [then] gluing the bridges in place.[9]

Therefore the enlightened ruler clothes himself with rites and propriety [and] girdles himself with discipline and conduct. His clothes suffice

to cover his frame,
to follow the ancient canons,
to accommodate bowing and bending,
to convenience his body and frame,
to ease his movement and steps.

He does not strive for an extraordinary or beautiful appearance or a cornered, diagonal cut.

His belt suffices

to tie a knot and gather the flaps,
to bind tightly and cinch fast.

He feels no urgency that [it be made of] round and square patterned [embroidery].

Thus he institutes Rites and Rightness; he acts with utmost Moral Potency, but he is not fixated on the Confucians and the Mohists.

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1. These were means to spy on or fraternize with the opposite sex outside marriage.
2. "Mountain of dregs" and "roasting beam" refer to the extravagant feasts given by Tyrant Djou, last king of the Shang dynasty, and the cruel punishments he meted out to his enemies.
3. The *xiang* and *diti* were interpreters employed to facilitate interactions between the Chinese Central States and their "barbarian" neighbors. Their exact functions are unknown.
4. Longxi was a commandery in the northwestern territory of the Han Empire (in present-day Gansu Province). "Swimming in Longxi" evidently was or became a recognizable trope for a dangerous or foolhardy activity, but if there was an antecedent text that helped explain why, it has been lost.
5. The meaning here is not completely transparent in either the *Huainanzi* or the parallel passage in the *Zhuangzi*. The sense seems to be that true personal advancement depends on "forgetting" the constituents of individual identity. Thus Confucius teaches best when he forgets Yan Hui, and Hui studies best when he forgets Confucius. What "persists" in the wake of such forgetting is pristine nature, which is merged with the Way.
6. For these anecdotes, see the "Glossary of Personal Names."

7. The Confucians advocated elaborate mourning rituals extending over twenty-five months, whereas the Mohists advocated simple and austere mourning rituals lasting only three months. The *Huainanzi* criticizes both positions.
8. In legendary times, the Youhu clan rebelled against Qi, son of Yu the Great (tamer of the Great Flood) because they objected to Yu's bequeathing the throne to Qi by hereditary succession. (They contended that he should have followed the example of Yao and Shun and handed over the throne to a virtuous commoner.) The rebellion failed.
9. The syntax of the original text is convoluted, but this seems to be the sense of the metaphor: Chinese zitherlike instruments, such as the twenty-five-string *se*, had wooden bridges that could be moved back and forth along the strings to adjust their pitch. A Three Kingdoms (220–265 C.E.) text contains this anecdote: "A man of Qi went to a man of Zhao to study the *se*. He relied on [the teacher] to first tune it, then glued the bridges in place and went home. For three years, he could not play a single melody."

Twelve

RESPONSES OF THE WAY

"Responses of the Way"
picks out and draws together the relics of past affairs,
pursues and surveys the traces of bygone antiquity,
and investigates the reversals of bad and good fortune, benefit and harm.
It tests and verifies them according to the techniques of Lao and Zhuang,
thus matching them to the trajectories of gain and loss.
"An Overview of the Essentials" (21.2)

This chapter describes the qualities of the ideal ruler through fifty-six anecdotes, each capped with a citation from the *Laozi* that supports the anecdote's didactic claims. These anecdotes and many others of the same kind appear to have circulated in various forms (written, oral, or both) during the Warring States and Han periods and may be considered a distinctive genre of early Chinese prose. Those collected in "Responses of the Way" contain everything from recondite accounts of mystical wandering to moralizing speeches, ethical prescriptions, and practical political counsel. They illustrate how the Way can be understood by the ruler and be used to ensure the success and prosperity of his reign. The *Laozi* here is vested with canonical authority, showing how the anecdotes should be interpreted so as to support the vision of empire and sage-rulership promoted in the *Huainanzi* more generally.

As is true of several other chapters of the *Huainanzi* consisting of many short sections (for example, chapters 10, 14, 16, 17, and 18), "Responses of the Way" begins with an establishing anecdote that sets the theme for the chapter as a whole. Section 12.1 features short dialogues between Grand Purity and Inexhaustible, Non-action and Non-beginning, concerning the nature of the Way. These dialogues affirm the ineffable unity of the Way and are reinforced by two quotations from the *Laozi*. The first states that "when all the world recognizes good as good, there is ill," and the second is

the famous affirmation that “those who know do not speak; those who speak do not know.” The reader thus is prepared to read the following anecdotes as a discourse on the nature of the Way, with interpretations backed by the authority of the *Laozi*.

These anecdotes depict crucial moments and dilemmas in a wide range of political contexts, discussing the principles to be implemented and attributes to be embodied by the ideal ruler to ensure the success of his regime. As is true of the *Huainanzi* generally, this chapter draws on and synthesizes a wide range of philosophical principles and political techniques. The ideal ruler depicted here is not only a self-cultivated Daoist sage but also a compassionate moralist and a hard-headed realist. Filtered through the lens of the *Laozi*, these anecdotes illustrate the applicability of the Way to a variety of human affairs.

Twelve

12.1

Grand Purity asked Inexhaustible, “Do you know the Way?”
Inexhaustible responded, “I don’t know it.”
[Grand Purity] then asked Non-action, “Do *you* know the Way?’
Non-action replied, “I know it.”
[Grand Purity said,] “Does this Way that you know have norms?”
Non-action responded, “Yes, the Way that I know has norms.”
[Grand Purity] inquired, “What are the norms, then?”
Non-action responded, “The Way that I know

can be weak or strong;
it can be soft or hard;
it can be yin or yang;
it can be dark or bright;
it can embrace or contain Heaven and Earth;
it can respond to or await the Limitless.

These are the norms by which I know the Way.”

Grand Purity then asked Non-beginning, “Earlier, I asked Inexhaustible about the Way and Inexhaustible replied, ‘I don’t know it.’ I then asked Nonaction and Non-action responded, ‘I know it.’ So I asked him, ‘Does this Way that you know have norms?’ Non-action then responded, ‘Yes, the Way that I know has norms.’ When I asked him whether he could [name] the norms, he responded, ‘I know that the Way

can be weak or strong;
it can be soft or hard;
it can be yin or yang;
it can be dark or bright;
it can embrace or contain Heaven and Earth;
it can respond to or await the Limitless.

These are the norms by which I know the Way.’ This being so, between Inexhaustible’s not knowing and Non-action’s knowing, which is right and which is wrong?”

Non-beginning answered,

“Not knowing it is deep while knowing it is shallow;
not knowing it is internal while knowing it is external;
not knowing it is refined while knowing it is coarse.”
Grand Purity then gazed up at the heavens and said with a long sigh,
“Then is not knowing, in fact, knowing?
And is knowing, in fact, not knowing?
Who knows that knowing it is not knowing
and that not knowing it is knowing?”
Non-beginning responded,
“The Way cannot be heard, for what is heard is not the Way;
the Way cannot be seen, for what is seen is not the Way;
the Way cannot be spoken, for what is spoken is not the Way.
Who knows the formlessness of what gives form to form?
Therefore the *Laozi* says:
“When all the world recognizes good as good,
there is ill.”
Therefore
those who know do not speak;
those who speak do not know.

12.3

Huizi drafted the state laws on behalf of King Hui [of Wei]. When he had completed them, he showed them to the elders, all of whom praised them. He then submitted them to King Hui. King Hui was elated by them and showed them to Zhai Jian. Zhai Jian exclaimed, “Excellent.”

King Hui inquired, “Since they are excellent, can we implement them?”

Zhai Jian responded, “We cannot.”

King Hui then asked, “If they are excellent, why can we not implement them?”

Zhai Jian answered, “Now take those who haul heavy logs: those in front call, ‘Heave!’ while those behind respond, ‘Ho!’ This is a chant to encourage the strength of those who haul heavy loads. Could it really be that they do not know either the melodies of Zheng and Wey or the [tune called] ‘Whirling Chu’? Although they know such melodies, they do not use them because they do not suit the circumstance as well as this chant does. Governing a state is a matter of ritual and not a matter of literary eloquence.” Therefore the *Laozi* says:

"The more detailed the laws and edicts,
the more thieves and robbers there are."

This is what is meant here.

12.5

When the Duke of Bo won possession of the state of Jing [i.e., Chu], he could not [bring himself to] distribute among the people the grain [kept in] the storehouses. On the seventh day [after the conquest], Shi Qi entered [the capital] and said [to the Duke of Bo]: "You obtained this wealth through unrighteous means. Moreover, you could not [bring yourself to] share it. Calamity is sure to arrive. If you are incapable of giving [this wealth] to the people, it would be best to burn it so as not to give them cause to harm us." The Duke of Bo did not heed his advice.

On the ninth day [after the conquest], the Duke of She entered [the capital]. He brought out the goods from the Supreme Storehouse in order to distribute them to the multitudes. He then removed the weapons from the Lofty Repository in order to distribute them to the common people. Thereafter he attacked the Duke of Bo, and on the nineteenth day [after the conquest] he captured him.

To desire the state when one does not yet possess it may be called the utmost avarice. To be incapable of acting on behalf of others, not to mention being incapable of acting on behalf of oneself, may be called utmost foolishness. How is the Duke of Bo's stinginess any different from the cannibal owl's love for its offspring?

Therefore the *Laozi* says:

"Rather than holding it upright and filling it to the brim,
better to have stopped in time.
Hammer it to a point,
and the sharpness cannot be preserved forever."

12.8

Viscount Xiang of Zhao dispatched an attacking force against [the "barbarian" state of] Dee and defeated it. When the inhabitants of [the two cities of] Zuo and Zhong had been captured, a messenger arrived to report the victory to Viscount Xiang, who was just about to eat his meal. When Viscount Xiang heard the news, an anxious expression appeared on his face.

His attendants asked: “Capturing two cities in one morning is a cause for celebration. Why, then, do you appear so anxious?”

Viscount Xiang replied: “The swelling of the Yangzi and Yellow rivers does not last more than three days; wild winds and violent rains do not last a morning; the sun at high noon lasts for less than a moment. Now the virtuous conduct of the Zhao clan has not yet amounted to anything, and yet in one morning two cities have been captured. Our demise is imminent!”

When Confucius heard about this, he said: “The Zhao clan will surely prosper!”

Anxiety leads to prosperity;
happiness leads to ruin.

Winning is not difficult, but preserving victory presents real challenges. The worthy ruler relies on his sense of anxiety to preserve victory, and so his good fortune extends to his descendants. The states of Qi, Chu, Wu, and Yue all were victorious for a time, yet eventually their rulers were captured and ruined because they did not understand how to preserve victory. Only the ruler who possesses the Way can preserve victory. Confucius had enough strength to draw back the bolted gate of the capital, but he did not want to become known for his strength. Mozi engaged in defensive warfare that forced Gongshu Ban to submit to him, yet Mozi did not want to be known as a warrior. Those who are skilled at preserving victory consider their strength as weakness.

Therefore the *Laozi* says:

“The Way is empty,
yet when you use it, you need not refill it.”

12.13

Marquis Wu of Wei asked Li Ke: “Why did the state of Wu perish?”

Li Ke responded: “Countless battles and countless victories.”

Marquis Wu retorted: “But countless battles and countless victories are the good fortune of the state and its ruling family. How could such things be the sole cause of Wu’s downfall?”

Li Ke replied:

“With countless battles, the populace grows exhausted;
with countless victories, the ruler grows arrogant.

Rare indeed is the state that does not perish when an arrogant ruler governs an exhausted populace!

Arrogance leads to recklessness, and recklessness depletes material resources.

Exhaustion leads to resentment, and resentment drives the people to their wits' end.

Given that both superior and subordinate were depleted, the demise of Wu appears to have occurred rather late. This is why King Fuchai [of Wu] took his own life after [his defeat at the battle of] Gansui."

Therefore the *Laozi* says:

"To withdraw when merit is achieved and reputation established is the Way of Heaven."

12.18

Duke Huan [of Qi] was reading in the upper part of his hall while Wheelwright Flat was hewing a wheel in the lower part. Setting aside his hammer and chisel, the wheelwright asked Duke Huan, "I venture to ask what books you are reading?"

"The books of the sages," said the duke.

"Are the sages still alive?"

"They already are dead," said the duke.

"Then what you are reading are merely the lees and dregs of the sages."

Flushing in anger, Duke Huan replied, "How dare you, a wheelwright, presume to criticize the books I am reading? If you can explain yourself, all right. If you cannot explain yourself, you shall die."

"Yes, I can explain. I will put it in terms of my occupation as a wheelwright," said Wheelwright Flat. "If [the blows of the mallet] are too hard, [the chisel] will bite and not budge; if they are too gentle, [the chisel] will slide and not take hold. To make the chisel neither slide nor stick is something you can sense with your hand and feel with your heart. Then you can get it down to the utmost subtlety. But I have not been able to teach it to my son, and my son has not been able to learn it from me. That's why I am an old man still hewing wheels after sixty years. Now what the sages have said contains some truth, but since they are dead and long gone, all that remains is the lees and dregs [of their teachings]."

Therefore the *Laozi* says:

"The Way that can be spoken
is not the constant Way;
the Name that can be named

is not the constant Name."

12.19

Previously, when Sicheng Zihan acted as minister to the state of Song, he said to the lord of Song, "The danger or safety of this state and the orderliness or disorderliness of its people depend on how you execute rewards and punishments. Now the gifts of rank and reward are what the people love—these you should carry out personally. The punishments of execution and mutilation are what the people hate—may I ask that I administer them?"

The lord of Song responded: "Excellent! I will enjoy the peoples' praises while you will suffer their resentments. This way I'll be sure to know how to avoid being the laughingstock of the Lords of the Land."

The lord of Song then carried out the rewards while Zihan [implemented] the punishments. When the people of the state came to understand that the regulations concerning executions and amputations rested solely with Zihan, the grand ministers of state treated him with affection, and the hundred surnames [i.e., the common people] feared him. Before a year had passed, Zihan had murdered the lord of Song and usurped his government. Therefore the *Laozi* says:

"The fish must not be allowed to leave the deep;
the efficacious instruments of state must not be revealed to anyone."

12.24

Viscount Jian of Zhao died and had not yet been buried when the people of Zhongmou shifted their allegiance to the state of Qi. When Viscount Jian of Zhao had been buried for five days, Viscount Xiang [his son] raised troops to attack and encircle them. The encirclement was not yet complete, when a one-hundred-foot section of the city wall suddenly crumbled. Viscount Xiang then beat the gong and withdrew his troops. An official of his army remonstrated with him, saying, "When you were punishing the crimes of Zhongmou, its city walls crumbled. This is a sign that Heaven supports us. Why, then, should we abandon the attack?"

Viscount Xiang replied, "I heard that Shuxiang once said: 'A Superior Man does not impose on others when they profit, nor does he attack others in distress.' Let the people of Zhongmou repair their walls. Only when the walls have been repaired, will we attack them." When the people of

Zhongmou heard of the viscount's [sense of] justice, they asked to surrender.

Therefore the *Laozi* says:

"Now,
it is because he alone does not contend
that no one can contend with him."

12.31

When Duke Wen of Jin attacked the city of Yuan, he agreed with his grand ministers on [a period of] three days [to capture the city]. When three days passed and Yuan did not surrender, Duke Wen ordered a retreat. A military officer said: "Yuan is sure to surrender in another day or two."

The ruler responded: "I did not realize that it would not be possible to defeat Yuan in three days and so agreed with the grand ministers on [a period of] three days to capture the city of Yuan. Now if we do not end this campaign, even though the designated time has elapsed, it would mean forfeiting my trustworthiness to obtain Yuan. I will not do it."

When the people of Yuan heard about this, they said: "With a ruler like this, how could we refuse to surrender?" They promptly surrendered. When the people of Wen heard about this, they also asked to surrender.

Therefore the *Laozi* says:

"How dim! How obscure!
Yet within it is the Quintessence.
This essence is profoundly genuine,
for what lies within is trustworthy.
Therefore beautiful words can buy honor,
[but] beautiful deeds can raise a man above others."

12.36

King Cheng [of Zhou] questioned Yin Yi about governing. "What kind of virtuous conduct will inspire the people to feel affection for their ruler?" he asked.

Yin Yi replied: "Employ them according to the proper seasons. Treat them with respect and compliance."

King Cheng inquired: "To what extent should one practice such things?"

Yin Yi responded: "Practice them as if you were facing a deep abyss or treading on thin ice."

King Cheng said: “How frightening to be a king!”

Yin Yi replied: “Those between Heaven and Earth and within the Four Seas who are good are loved by the people; those who are not good are despised by the people. In ancient times, the subjects of the Shang and Xia reversed their allegiances; they came to despise [the tyrants] Jie and Djou and submitted to the rulership of Kings Tang and Wu. The people of Susha all took it upon themselves to attack their lord and shift their allegiance to the Divine Farmer. Such things are well understood in our age. How could you not be frightened!”

Therefore the *Laozi* says:

“What others fear
you also must fear.”

12.41

The queen consort of the king of Qi died. The king wanted to appoint a new queen consort but had not yet decided who it would be, so he directed his ministers to deliberate the issue. The Duke of Xue, hoping to discover the king’s choice, presented him with ten pairs of earrings, one of which was especially beautiful. The next morning he asked about the whereabouts of the most beautiful pair of earrings and urged that the woman who now had them should be appointed queen consort. The king of Qi was delighted by this and thereafter respected and valued the Duke of Xue even more. Thus, if the intentions and desires of the lord are visible on the outside, he will fall subject to the control of his underlings.

Therefore the *Laozi* says:

“Block the openings,
shut the doors,
and all your life you will not labor.”

12.43

Mizi had governed Shanfu for three years when Wuma Qi changed his appearance by wearing tattered clothes and a short hemp jacket so that he could [secretly] observe what transformations had taken place there. He saw a night fisherman catch a fish and let it go. Wuma Qi asked him: “You sir, being a fisherman, want to catch fish. Why then do you catch them and let them go?”

The fisherman replied: “Mizi does not want us to catch small fish. Since all the fish I caught were small ones, I let them go.”

Wuma Qi returned home and reported his findings to Confucius: “Mizi is the most Morally Potent of all! He is able to inspire people to conduct themselves in the dark of the night as if they were facing a strict punishment for their actions. How is Master Mi able to achieve such things?”

Confucius replied: “I, Qiu, once asked him about governing. He replied, ‘Sincerity in this takes shape in that.’ Mizi must be practicing this technique.”

Therefore the *Laozi* says:

“He discards that and takes this.”

Thirteen

BOUNDLESS DISCOURSES

"Boundless Discourses" provides the means by which to
stitch up the spaces in ragged seams and hems
and plug up the gaps in crooked and chattering teeth.[1]
It welcomes the straightforward and straightens out the devious,
in order to extend the Original Unhewn and thereby anticipate
the alternations of success and failure
and the reversals of benefit and harm.
It is what enables you to
not be foolishly immersed in the advantages of political power,
not be seductively confused by the exigencies of affairs,
and so tally with constancy and change
to link up and discern timely and generational alterations,
and extend and adjust [your policies] in accordance with transformations.

"An Overview of the Essentials" (21.2)

Using numerous examples, "Boundless Discourses" shows that change has always been a part of human history, from remote antiquity to the present day. It argues that successful rulers do not resist change in a futile attempt to uphold the policies and standards of the past but instead modify their actions to suit changing customs and circumstances. Sages, on whom rulers are urged to model themselves, are portrayed as having a unique insight that allows them to see the enduring reality behind superficial qualities. That, in turn, enables them to adapt to change and to innovate while following diverse strategies to realize the Way under varying circumstances.

The vision of primordial antiquity presented here is somewhat different from that found in chapter 8, "The Basic Warp." In that chapter, the society of the remote past is presented as a kind of communitarian ideal that, regrettably but inevitably, is no longer available to us in more complicated modern times. Chapter 13, in contrast, acknowledges that primitive society was peaceful and innocent but also describes it as poor, inconvenient, and

dangerous. Therefore, to ease the lives of the people, the sages contrived inventions: houses, agricultural implements, and much more. Chapters 8 and 13 do agree, however, that every change begets more change and that the ruler's role is managing change and adapting to new circumstances.

As is true of many chapters in the *Huainanzi*, and in keeping with the text's claim for itself, this chapter draws on a wide range of earlier texts and intellectual lineages to create its own distinctive synthesis. Of particular importance to its emphasis on the inevitability of change are the *Mozi* and the *Hanfeizi*, both of which affirm that not only is it impossible to return to the simple ways of the remote past but if it were possible, it still would not be desirable. This underscores the basic stance of the *Huainanzi* as a whole: that it is a practical blueprint for successful government in its own time.

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1. "Ragged seams and hems" and "gaps in crooked and chattering teeth" are metaphors for the various shortcomings of the age, the consequences of persistent decline from the primordial era of sage-rulership.

Thirteen

13.1

In ancient times, those who wore [plain] caps and [simple] rolled collars ruled the world. Their Potency was of life, not death, of giving, not usurping. None in the world rejected their service; all embraced their Potency. In those times,

yin and yang were harmonious and tranquil;
the winds and rains were timely and moderate.
The myriad things prospered and flourished;
nests of birds and owls could be inspected on bended knee;
wild animals could be ensnared and kept compliant.

What need was there for official costumes, wide sashes, buckled collars, grand insignia?

13.2

In ancient times, the people lived in humid lands, hollowing out caves again and again.

In the winters, they could not bear the frost, the snow, the fog, the dew; in the summers, they could not bear the oppressive heat, the sultry days, the mosquitoes, the flies.

The sages therefore created for them the pounding of earth and the cutting of trees to make houses. Above they placed ridgepoles, and below they placed rafters

to protect against the winds and rain
and to keep out the cold and heat.

The common people were put at ease.

Bo Yu was the first to make clothing. He spun the hemp, working the warp with his hand, suspending it through his fingers, and forming it like netting. Later generations [of sages] made looms for doubled weaves to increase their usefulness. The people were thus able to protect their bodies and drive off the cold.

In ancient times, [the people]

sharpened sticks to plow,

polished clam shells to weed,
cut firewood to make fuel,
and hauled jars to draw water.

The people labored, but their gains were few. Later generations [of sages] made them plows, plowshares, and hoes; axes for cutting firewood; and well sweeps for drawing water. The people were at ease, [and] their gains multiplied.

In ancient times, the great rivers and famed waterways cut across the roads and impeded the comings and goings of the people. Consequently, [the sages] hollowed logs and squared timbers to make rafts and boats. Therefore, according to a place's circumstances of plenty or dearth, things could be exchanged and transported.

They made shoes from hides and traversed a thousand *li*;
they endured the labor of carrying loads on their backs.

[The sages] thus created for them
the bending [of wood] into wheels and the constructing of carts,
the hitching of horses and the yoking of oxen.

The people could thus go great distances without tiring.

Since ferocious beasts would injure people and there was nothing with which to stop them, [the sages] created for them the casting of metal and the forging of iron to make weapons and arms. The animals could harm them no more.

Thus,
pressed by difficulties, [the sages] searched for what was advantageous;
bound by adversity, they created what was necessary.

In each case, the people used what they had come to know [from the sages]
to eliminate what harmed them
and to seek what benefited them.

If the unchanging past cannot be followed, if the martial implements [of the past] cannot be relied on, then there will be [occasions when] the laws and standards of the former kings must be adjusted to changing [circumstances].

13.6

In antiquity,
the people were pure, the artisans skillful,
the merchants straightforward, the women simple.

This is why

governance and education were easily transformed [in response to circumstances],

and habits and customs were easily adjusted [to suit changing times].

In the present age, Moral Potency is declining more and more, and the customs of the people are becoming more and more stingy. Wanting to use straightforward and simple laws to put in order a people already corrupted is like wanting to control a horse without a bit and a whip.

In ancient times, the Divine Farmer used no regulations or commands, yet the people followed. Tang [i.e., Yao] and Yu [i.e., Shun] had regulations and commands but no punishments.

The Xia used no false words;

the Shang made oaths;

the Zhou made covenants.

When one comes down to the present time, people accept shame and think lightly of being disgraced; they value taking and belittle giving. Wanting to use the way of the Divine Farmer to put things in order would only make chaos inevitable. When Bocheng Zigao resigned from being a Lord of the Land and simply tilled the fields, the world exalted him. Now, those who resign from office and become hermits occupy the bottom [rung] of their locales. How can this be considered the same?

The armies of antiquity had bows and swords; their lances had no sharp points; their halberds, no tips.

The armies of the later ages have siege weapons and battering rams with which to attack, spiked balls with which to defend, arrays of crossbows with which to shoot, and iron chariots with which to fight.

When states fought in ancient times, they did not kill the young, [and] they did not capture the old.

What in antiquity was proper is today laughable; what was taken to be honorable in antiquity is taken to be disgraceful today; what was taken to be order in antiquity is taken to be chaos today.

Now,

the Divine Farmer and Fuxi did not give out rewards and punishments, yet the people did no wrong; but those who govern [today] are unable to dispense with laws and rule the people.

Shun grasped a shield and axe and brought the Miao rulers to submission, yet those who lead campaigns [today] are unable to use

arms to reduce the violence.

Looking at the issue from this perspective, it is clear that laws and standards are the means to assess the customs of the people and regulate relaxation and work; instruments and implements accord with the alterations of the times and are regulated to fit what is suitable. Now,

the sages created laws and the myriad people were regulated by them;
the worthies established rituals and the ignorant were restrained by them.
[But] people who are regulated by laws cannot propose far-reaching initiatives;
those who are restrained by rituals cannot effect responsive alterations.
An ear that does not know the difference between high and low [tones] cannot order tunes and notes;
a mind that does not understand the source of order and disorder cannot impose regulations and laws.

It is necessary to have

an ear that uniquely hears,
discernment that uniquely sees;

for only then can you take personal responsibility for implementing the Way.

Now,
the Yin replaced the Xia;
the Zhou replaced the Yin;
the Spring and Autumn period replaced the Zhou.

The rites of the Three Dynasties were not the same. Why should antiquity be followed?

13.13

When [a ruler] causes the world to be desolate and chaotic,
Rites and Rightness are cut off;
bonds and ties are dispensed with.
The strong take advantage of the weak;
attackers force the submission of the vanquished;
minister and ruler lack hierarchical distinction;
the noble and the humble lack deferential order;
armor and helmets become infested with lice and fleas;
swallows and sparrows roost in the tents and canopies;

so that the soldiers never get any rest. At that point, he may begin to adopt a cautious demeanor and [conduct] reverent rites, but [it will be too late and] he will invariably be destroyed with no possibility of being restored.

When [a ruler causes] the world to be secure and peaceful,
administration and instruction are harmonious and equitable;
the one hundred names [i.e., the common people] are reverent and affable;
superiors and subordinates are mutually affectionate.

At that point, [the ruler] might begin to establish an atmosphere of leniency. [If so,] he will embolden the courageous and strong and so will be unable to avoid falling subject to the laws of those who have authority.

For this reason,
sages can be yin, and they can be yang;
they can be weak, and they can be strong;
in tempo with the times, they are active or still;
in accordance with the inner substance of things, they establish merit.
When things become active, they know their reversions;
when affairs sprout forth, they anticipate their alterations;
when things transform, they act in their image;
when things move, they respond to them;
this is why to the end of their days, they are effective and free of troubles.

13.20

With regard to actions,

there are some that you want to carry out, but circumstances warrant that you abandon them;
there are some that you want to avoid, but circumstances warrant that you pursue them.

There was a man of Chu who boarded a boat and encountered a typhoon. The waves were upon him, and in his fright he threw himself into the water. It is not that he did not covet life and fear death but that sometimes in fearing death, you commit the contradiction of being forgetful of your life. Thus human lusts and desires are also like this.

Among the people of Qi was someone who stole gold. Just when the market was most crowded, he arrived, grabbed it, and fled. When held by force and asked: “Why did you steal gold from the market?” He responded:

“I did not see anyone, I only saw gold.” When the mind is preoccupied with desires, it forgets what it does. For this reason, sages

scrutinize the alterations of movement and rest,
accord with the due measures of receiving and giving,
order the feelings of liking and loathing,
and harmonize with the occasions of happiness and anger.

When [the distinctions of] movement and rest are attained, calamities will not be encountered;

when receiving and giving are in accord, crimes will not accumulate;
when liking and loathing are ordered, anxiety will not come near;
when happiness and anger are in [proper] occasion, resentment will not encroach.

Thus, those who have achieved the Way are not indifferent to obtaining [things] but are not ravenous for wealth;

what they have, they do not abandon,
but what they do not have, they do not seek.
They are constantly full but not overflowing;
they persevere in emptiness but are easily satisfied.

Now the rain that drips from the eaves is sufficient to fill to overflowing a *hu* vessel, but the waters of the Yangzi and Yellow Rivers cannot fill a leaking *zhi* cup.[1] Thus the human heart is like this. If you make yourself conform to the Techniques of the Way in measurement and limitation, food will fill the emptiness; clothes will block the cold; and it will suffice to care for the body of one seven feet tall.[2] But if you lack the Techniques of the Way in measurement and limitation and try to practice restraint and moderation on your own, the positional advantage of ten thousand chariots will not suffice to make you honored, and all the wealth in the world will not suffice to make you happy.

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1. A *hu* is a large storage vessel, and a *zhi* is a small drinking cup.
2. A Han “foot” (*chi*) was about nine inches long, so, in modern terms a person “seven feet tall” in Han measure would have been about five feet, three inches.

Fourteen

SAYINGS EXPLAINED

"Sayings Explained" provides the means by which to
compare through analogy the tenets of human affairs
and elucidate through illustration the substance of order and disorder.
It ranks the hidden meanings of subtle sayings,
explaining them with literary expressions that reflect ultimate principles.
Thus it patches up and mends deficiencies due to errors and oversights.
"An Overview of the Essentials" (21.2)

"Sayings Explained" is a collection of gnomic sayings (set off in italics in our text), most of which are followed by a few lines of commentary that explicate and clarify their significance. Although at first glance, the sayings and explications may seem to be merely conventional statements of received wisdom, taken as a whole they recapitulate and reinforce important concepts and themes addressed elsewhere in the *Huainanzi*: What are the essential attributes of the sage? How does the sage bring order to his intrinsic self and, by extension, to the world? The sayings collected in this chapter address these central concerns, and the truths they are intended to express are explained through various analogies and illustrations.

Many, perhaps most, of the sayings collected here would have been familiar to educated people in the early Han, as analogous passages can be found in a wide range of earlier texts. The distinctive contribution of the *Huananzi*'s treatment of these sayings lies in the explications, which consistently address the attributes of sage-rulership and how they may be attained through self-cultivation. The sayings and explications depict several ideal human types that illustrate what a sage-ruler can and should be. The Genuine Person embodies a pristine, primeval time before the emergence of time, when there was perfect unity. He identifies completely with the Grand One—that is, the divine embodiment of primal nondifferentiation. The Sage is fundamentally, although not exclusively, associated with the empty, nameless, formless, non-active, non-striving,

nonintervening attributes of the Way. His ability to embody these aspects of the Way empowers him to sustain an inner equanimity in his person and a harmonious unity in his governance. Thus in ordering his person, the sage avoids the various external distractions that can entangle the mind and disturb the nature. In ruling, the sage's qualities enable him to have to suffer neither the malice of his underlings nor the resentment of the common people. The Superior Man is more deeply engaged with the differentiated world of affairs but nevertheless rises above petty concerns. The Genuine Person, the Sage, and the Superior Man all have profound lessons to teach real-world rulers about the nature and practice of rulership.

Fourteen

14.1

Cavernous and undifferentiated Heaven and Earth, chaotic and inchoate Uncarved Block, not yet created and fashioned into things: this we call the "Grand One." Together emerging from this unity, so that each acquired its distinctive qualities, there were birds, there were fish, there were animals: this we call the "differentiation of things."

Regions became distinguished according to their categories;
things became differentiated according to their groupings.

Their natures and destinies were dissimilar; all acquired their physical forms in the realm of "Being."

Separate and not interconnected, differentiated as the myriad things, none could return to their Ancestor. Thus,

when animated, things are said to be alive;
when dead, things are said to be expired.

In both cases, they are things. It is not that there was nothing that made things into things; rather, what made things into things is not among the myriad things.

In antiquity, at the Grand Beginning, human beings came to life in "Nonbeing" and acquired a physical form in "Being." Having a physical form, [human beings] came under the control of things. But those who can return to that from which they were born, as if they had not yet acquired a physical form, are called the "Genuine." The Genuine are those who have not yet begun to differentiate from the Grand One.

14.2

The sage

does not for the sake of a name become a corpse;
does not for the sake of stratagems store things up;
does not for the sake of affairs take on responsibility;
does not for the sake of wisdom become a ruler.

[The sage]

dwells in the Formless,
moves in the Traceless,
and wanders in the Beginningless.
He does not initiate things for the sake of good fortune,
nor does he begin things to deal with misfortune.
He remains in Emptiness and Non-being
and moves when he cannot do otherwise.
For those who desire good fortune, sometimes suffer misfortune,
and those who desire benefit, sometimes suffer harm.

Thus,

those who are secure through non-action become endangered when they lose that by which they are secure [i.e., non-action].
Those who are well ordered through nonintervention become disordered when they lose that by which they are well ordered.

14.5

Those who trust themselves cannot be swayed by slander or flattery.
Those whose knowledge is sufficient cannot be enticed by power or profit.

Thus,

those who fully comprehend the genuine qualities of their nature do not strive to accomplish what their nature cannot accomplish.
Those who fully comprehend the genuine qualities of their destiny do not concern themselves with what their destiny cannot control.

For those who fully comprehend the Way, things are not enough to disorder their inner harmony.

14.8

Trace to the source Heaven's decree,
cultivate the techniques of the mind,
regulate likes and dislikes,
follow your disposition and nature,
and the Way of governing [oneself] will come through.

If you trace to the source Heaven's decree, you will not be deluded by bad or good fortune.
If you cultivate the techniques of the mind, you will not be unrestrained in your happiness and anger.

If you regulate your likes and dislikes, you will not covet what is useless.
If you follow your disposition and nature, your desires will not exceed the appropriate limits.
If you are not deluded by bad or good fortune, your movement and stillness will comply with the inherent principles of things.
If you are not unrestrained in your happiness and anger, your rewards and punishments will not be partial.
If you do not covet what is useless, you will not allow your desires to harm your nature.
If your desires do not exceed the appropriate limits, you will nurture your nature and know contentment.

As a general rule, these four things cannot be sought after in what is outside the self nor can you bestow them on others. You can obtain them only by returning to the self.

14.9

The world
cannot be acted on by knowledge;
cannot be discerned through perceptiveness;
cannot be governed by intervening;
cannot be subjugated through humaneness;
and cannot be vanquished through strength.

These five are all aspects of human talent. If your Potency does not flourish, you will not be able to perfect even one of them. Where Potency is established, these five will not be endangered. But where these five appear, Potency will not be established.

Thus,
if you grasp the Way, stupidity will be more than sufficient;
if you lose the Way, knowledge will be insufficient to the task.

14.11

The root of governance lies in bringing security to the people.
The root of bringing security to the people lies in using them sufficiently.
The root of using them sufficiently lies in not taking them from their seasonal tasks.

The root of not taking them from their seasonal tasks lies in decreasing what they need to attend to.
The root of decreasing what they need to attend to lies in moderating their desire.
The root of moderating their desire lies in returning to their nature.
The root of returning to their nature lies in eradicating [what] burdens [their mind].

If you eradicate [what] burdens [their mind], they will become empty. Being empty, they will become balanced.

Balance is the beginning of the Way.
Emptiness is the abode of the Way.

14.17

If you disregard the Way and rely on knowledge, invariably you will be endangered.
If you abandon technique and employ talent, invariably you will encounter difficulties.
There have been those who perished because their desires were numerous;
there have never been those who were endangered because they were free from desires.
There have been those who desired order but suffered disorder;
there have never been those who preserved what is constant and yet lost their state.

Thus,
while knowledge [alone] will not suffice for you to avoid trouble,
stupidity [alone] will not suffice to jeopardize your peace.
If you preserve these distinctions
and act in accordance with these principles,
when you lose, you will not feel vexed,
and when you succeed, you will not feel happy.
For when you accomplish something, it is not because you have acted deliberately,
and when you acquire something, it is not because you have sought after something.
What you receive, you take without [consciously] accepting;
what you give, you confer without [consciously] distributing.

If you [nourish] life in accordance with spring,
and you kill in accordance with autumn,
those to whom you grant life will not view you as exerting Moral Potency,
and those whom you subject to death will not view you as expressing anger.

[Thus] you will have come close to the Way.

14.18

The sage does not do things that are wrong
yet does not hate those who do wrong to him.
He cultivates Moral Potency worthy of praise
yet does not seek the praise of others.
He cannot prevent ill fortune from arising
yet trusts that he personally will not summon it.
He cannot assure that good fortune will invariably befall him
yet trusts that he personally will not yield to it.

[Thus,]

if misfortune befalls him, because it is not something he sought to bring about, should he fail, he feels no anxiety.
If good fortune befalls him, because it is not something he sought to bring about, should he succeed, he feels no pride.
He knows that what determines bad and good fortune is beyond his control.
Thus, he is joyful abiding at his leisure and governs through non-action.

14.22

The sage has no conscious deliberations;
he has no fixed ideas.
He neither welcomes what arrives
nor sends off what departs.
Though others occupy positions north, south, east, and west,
he alone is established at the center.

Thus, he encounters various crooked ways, but he does not lose his rectitude; the world flows to and fro, but he alone does not leave his [ancestral] shrine and walled city.

Thus,
he does not encourage what he likes,
nor does he avoid what he dislikes;
he simply follows Heaven's Way.
He does not initiate,
nor does he personally assume authority;
he simply complies with Heaven's Principles.
He does not make plans in advance,
nor does he miss the opportune moment;
he simply complies with Heaven's Times.
He does not seek to obtain things,
nor does he shun good fortune;
he simply goes along with Heaven's Patterns.
He does not seek after what he does not possess,
nor does he lose what he has obtained.
Inwardly he experiences no unexpected misfortune;
outwardly he experiences no unexpected good fortune.
Since neither ill fortune nor good fortune arises, how can others harm him?

14.35

The Way of Rulership is not the means by which one acts;
it is the means by which one does not act.

What does "non-action" mean? [It means that]
the wise do not avail themselves of their position to intervene;
the courageous do not avail themselves of their position to engage in violence;
and the humane do not avail themselves of their position to confer kindness.
This may be called "non-action." Through non-action, you can grasp the One.
The One is the root of the myriad things. It is the Way that is unopposed.

14.39

To regulate your body and nourish your nature,
moderate your sleep and rest,
be appropriate in your food and drink,
harmonize your happiness and anger,

and make suitable your movement and stillness.

When you achieve the [ability to] carry out these things within the self, noxious *qi* will have no means to be produced. Is not this similar to one who, fearing an asthmatic attack might occur or a skin ulcer burst forth, takes the proper precautions in advance?

14.49

The clothing of the sage is neither long nor short.
His conduct is neither extraordinary nor unusual.

His clothing does not arouse notice.
His conduct does not elicit observation,
and his speech does not incite criticism.
When successful, he is not ostentatious.
When impoverished, he is not afraid.
When honored, he is not showy.
When ignored, he is not bereft.
He is extraordinary yet does not appear unusual.
He is always appropriate yet identifies with the multitudes.
There are no means to name him. This is what is called "Great Merging."

14.53

Too many deals impoverish the merchant.
Too much artistry exhausts the craftsman.

It is because their minds are not [focused on] one thing.

Thus,
when the span of a tree is great, its height is compromised.
When the flow of a river is wide, its depth is compromised.

If you possess knowledge but lack technique, though you bore with an awl you will never get through anything.

If you possess a hundred different kinds of skills but lack a single Way, though you achieve things you will not be able to sustain [your achievements].

Thus the *Odes* states:

"The good man, the Superior Man,
his propriety is one.
His propriety is one.

His heart is as if bound."
How bound by oneness is the Superior Man!

14.56

Non-action is the substance of the Way.
Following behind is the outward form of the Way.

Those who do not act control those who act; this is [called] technique.
Those who follow behind control those who take the lead; this is [called] the proper sequence of things.
If you rely on technique, you will be strong.
If you understand the proper sequence of things, you will be calm.

Now when it came to giving away Mr. Bian's jade disk,[1] when he had not yet obtained it, [Mr. Bian] was ahead. When he pleaded to present it and would not give up despite his indignation, he was behind.

If three men live together and two begin to quarrel, each will think he is right, and neither will listen to the other. Though the third man is a fool, he will invariably resolve the dispute from the sidelines. This is not due to his intelligence but is because he was not fighting.

If two men begin to fight and a weakling stands at their side, if he helps one man, that man will win. If he aids the other man, that man will avoid defeat. Though the two fighters are strong, invariably [the outcome is] controlled by the single weakling. This is not due to his courage, but due to the fact that he does not fight.

Looking at it from this perspective,
that those who follow behind control those who take the lead
and that those who are still defeat those who are excitable
is due to following the proper sequence of things.

To defy the Way and abandon the proper sequence of things, hoping thereby to encounter good luck;
to alter constant norms and change precedents, relying on your intelligence in your desire to cover up for yourself;
to pass over your own errors and to take credit when you hit the mark;
to conduct yourself from a position of darkness and recklessly change things;
to remain throughout your life unaware;
such actions are called "reckless."

To be dissatisfied with misfortune and satisfied with good fortune,

to regret committing errors and feel satisfied when you achieve merit,
to push ahead and not know to return,

this [too] is called “reckless.”

14.67

When the sage encounters things in the world amid their thousand alterations and myriad evolutions, he invariably relies on what never transforms to respond to what is always transforming.

Cold and heat stand in opposition to each other.

During the season of intense cold, the ground cracks and water freezes, yet fire’s capacity to burn is not diminished as a consequence.

During the season of intense heat, stones melt and metal fuses, yet fire’s capacity to burn is not enhanced as a consequence.

The alterations of cold and heat neither harm nor benefit his person, for his inner substance is unchanging.

14.71

When the Superior Man does good, he cannot ensure that it will bring good fortune;
when he refuses to do evil, he cannot ensure that it will not bring bad fortune.

If good fortune arrives, since it is not something he sought, he does not proclaim his achievements;
if bad fortune arrives, since it is not something he elicited, he does not regret his actions.

If he should cultivate himself inwardly to the utmost and still adversity and bad fortune arrive, it is due to Heaven and not the person. Therefore, within himself his mind is constantly tranquil and still, and his Moral Potency is unencumbered. Even the barking of a dog cannot startle him because he naturally trusts his genuine responses.

Thus,
those who understand the Way are not confused;
those who understand fate are free from anxiety.

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1. Mr. Bian’s jade disk, also known as Mr. He’s jade disk, was a fabulous precious object discovered by Bian He, a man of Chu, in the mountains of that state. When the jade was presented to King Li of Chu as an uncut matrix, the king suspected Bian He of fraud and had his left foot cut off as punishment. When King Li died and Bian He tried to present the jade to his son, King Wu, the

king ordered that his right foot be cut off. When King Wu finally had the stone cut and polished, its precious nature was revealed.

Fifteen

AN OVERVIEW OF THE MILITARY

"An Overview of the Military" provides the means by which to illuminate
the techniques of battle, victory, assault, and capture;
the force of formations and movements;
and the variations of deception and subterfuge
embodying the Way of Adaptation and Compliance
and upholding the Theory of Holding Back;
it is what [enables you] to
know that when you form for battle or deploy to fight contrary to the Way, it will not work;
know that when you assault and capture or fortify and defend contrary to Moral Potency, it will not be formidable.
If you truly realize its implications,
whether advancing or retreating, moving right or left,
there will be no place to be attacked or endangered.
It takes relying on force as its substance
and clarity and stillness as its constant.
It avoids fullness and follows emptiness,
as if driving forward a flock of sheep.
Such are the means to discuss military affairs.

"An Overview of the Essentials" (21.2)

One possible translation for the title of chapter 15, "Bing lue," is "Military Strategies." As the chapter summary makes clear, however, chapter 15 deals with all dimensions of military affairs, from tactics and strategy to basic military organization, the role of the military in state and society, and the ethics of war. Moreover, in section 21.3, the *Huainanzi* compilers make clear that chapter 15 was designed to exemplify the "overview" as a genre of writing. Thus we translate the title as "An Overview of the Military."

True to its title, chapter 15 surveys and draws on an expansive corpus of military writings inherited from the Warring States period (such as, but not

limited to, the famous *Master Sun's Arts of War* (*Sunzi bingfa*). By the Han, the oncenew outlook of these texts had become authoritative, and the *Huainanzi* treats their concepts and terminology as self-evidently normative. Thus battlefield outcomes are not determined by valor or divine favor but by the shifting dynamics of *shi*, or "force," a purely material measure of potential combat effectiveness. Victory is not secured by physical strength or bravado but by skillful manipulation of the "usual" and "extraordinary" tactical responses in order to confuse the opponent and gain the advantage of surprise.

Chapter 15 does bring its own original perspective to military affairs, however. The *Huainanzi* insists that human society had once (albeit briefly) existed in the complete absence of arms or conflict. Thus, although military affairs were indispensable to imperial rule (and national security) in the current age, they did not hold the key to ultimate power and authority. Moreover, although the authors acknowledge the importance of skill and knowledge, they insist that victory could be achieved only by the commander who had acquired transcendently penetrating insight through mystical self-cultivation. Finally, in keeping with Liu An's interests, "An Overview of the Military" emphasizes that the military could never be used to routinize power throughout the imperial domain. Military offensives might be undertaken only to "sustain those who [were] perishing, revive those [lineages] that had been cut off," that is, to protect the hereditary prerogatives of vassal princes like Liu An himself. The chapter ends with a description (15.26) of an extraordinary ritual in which the successful commanding general atones for his "treason" in wielding state power (which properly belongs to the ruler alone) during the course of the campaign.

Fifteen

15.1

In antiquity, those who used the military did not value expanding territory or covet the possession of gold and jade. They sought to sustain those who [were] perishing, revive those [lineages] that had been cut off, pacify the chaos of the world, and eliminate harm to the myriad people.

All beasts that have blood and *qi*,
are equipped with teeth and horns.
They have claws in front and paws behind.
Those with horns gore;
those with teeth bite;
those with poison sting;
those with hooves kick.
When they are happy, they play with one another;
when they are angry they injure one another;

this is their Heaven[-born] nature.

Humans have instincts for clothing and food, yet [material] things are lacking. Thus they settle together in various locations. If the division is not equal, if demands are not fulfilled, they fight. When they fight, the strong threaten the weak and the brave attack the cowardly.

People do not have strong muscles and bones or sharp claws and teeth, thus

they cut leather to make armor;
they forge iron to make blades.

Greedy and cruel people brutalize and rob the world. The myriad people are shaken; they cannot rest in tranquillity with what they possess. The sage rises up vehemently, punishing the strong and the violent [and] pacifying the chaotic age. He suppresses danger and eliminates disorder.

He makes the sullied pure;
he makes the imperiled calm.

Thus people are not cut off in mid[life].
The origins of the military are distant!

The Yellow Emperor once warred with Yan Di;

Zhuan Xu once fought with Gong Gong.
The Yellow Emperor warred in the wilds of Zhuolu;
Yao warred on the banks of the River Dan;
Shun attacked the Youmiao;
Qi attacked the Youhu.

Since the time of the Five Thearchs, [no one] has been able to ban [the military], much less in a declining age!

15.3

In regard to the military of later ages, although rulers may be without the Way, none do not dig moats, build battlements, and defend [them]. Those who attack do not do so to curtail violence or eliminate harm; they want to invade the land and expand their territory. For this reason, the bodies pile up and the blood flows; they face one another all day, yet the achievement of a hegemon does not appear in the age. It is because they act selfishly.

One who wars for territory cannot become a king;
one who wars for himself cannot establish his merit.
One who takes up a task on behalf of others will be aided by the multitude;
one who takes up a task on his own behalf will be discarded by the multitude.
One who is aided by the multitude must [become] strong even if he is weak;
one who is discarded by the multitude must perish even if he is great.

The military is
weak if it loses the Way;
strong if it obtains the Way.

The commander is
inept if he loses the Way;
skillful if he obtains the Way.

What is called the Way
embodies the circle and is modeled on the square,
shoulders the yin and embraces the yang,
is soft on the left and hard on the right,
treads in the obscure and carries illumination.

It alters and transforms without constancy; it obtains the source of the One and thereby responds limitlessly. This is called spirit illumination.

The circle is Heaven;
the square is earth.
Heaven is circular and without terminus, thus one cannot view its form;
the earth is square and without boundaries, thus one cannot see its gateway.
Heaven transforms and nurtures yet is without form;
Earth generates and rears and yet is without measure.

Vague, hazy, who knows their capacity?

All things have that which defeats them; only the Way is invincible. It is invincible because it has no constant shape or force. It cycles ceaselessly, like the motion of the sun and moon.

Just as summer and autumn alternate,
just as the sun and the moon have day and night,
it reaches an end and begins again;
it illuminates and becomes dark again.

None can attain its pattern.

It controls form yet is formless;
thus its merit can be complete.
It objectifies things yet is no object;
thus it triumphs and does not submit.

15.4

Form/punishment[1] is the ultimate of the military. Arriving at being without form/punishment may be called the ultimate of the ultimate. For this reason, the great military does no injury; it communicates with the ghosts and spirits. It does not brandish the five weapons, [yet] none in the world dares oppose it. It sets up its drums [but] does not open its arsenal, and none of the Lords of the Land do not freeze in terror. Thus

one who wars from the temple becomes emperor;
one who [effects] spirit transformation becomes king.

What is called "warring from the temple"[2] is modeling [oneself] on the Way of Heaven.

Spirit transformation is modeling [oneself] on the four seasons.

He cultivates governance within his borders and those afar long for his Potency;

he achieves victory without battle, and the Lords of the Land submit to his might.

It is because internally his government is ordered.

In antiquity those who obtained the Way

in stillness modeled [themselves] on Heaven and Earth,
in motion complied with the sun and moon.
In delight and anger they corresponded to the four seasons;
in calling and answering they were comparable to the thunder and lightning.
Their voice and breath did not oppose the eight winds;
their contracting and extending did not exceed the five standards.
Below to those [creatures] that have armor and scales;
above to those that have fur and feathers;

all were ordered from first to last. Among the myriad creatures and the hundred clans, from beginning to end, none was without its proper place.

For this reason, [the Way]

enters what is small without being pressed,
lodges in what is vast without being exposed.
It seeps into metal and stone;
it washes over grasses and trees.

[From] something that expands to fill the limits of the six coordinates to the end of a single hair, nothing does not cleave to it. The penetration of the Way suffuses what is [most] subtle. There is nowhere it does not reside; this is why it triumphs over the powerful and the many.

15.6

The military has three foundations:

In ordering the kingdom, regulate within the borders.
In effecting Humaneness and Rightness, spread Moral Potency and Benevolence.
In establishing correct laws, block deviant paths.

[When]

the collected ministers are intimately close,
the common people are harmonious,
superiors and inferiors are of a single mind,
ruler and minister unite their efforts.

The Lords of the Land submit to your might and the four directions cherish your Moral Potency;
you cultivate governance in the temple hall and extend control beyond one thousand *li*;
you fold your hands, issue commands, and the world responds as an echo.

This is the highest use of the military.

[When]

the territory is broad and the people numerous;
the ruler is worthy and the commanders loyal;
the kingdom is rich and the military strong;
covenants and prohibitions are trustworthy;
pronouncements and orders are clear.
The two armies oppose each other;
the bells and drums face each other;

yet the enemy flees before the soldiers meet or blades clash. This is the middling use of the military.

[When]

you understand what suits the terrain,
practice the beneficial [use of] narrow and obstructed [positions],
discern the alterations of the extraordinary and the usual,
investigate the rules for marching and formation, dispersion and concentration;
bind the drumsticks [to your forearms] and roll the drums.
White blades meet;
flying arrows are exchanged;
you wade through blood and tread through guts;
you cart the dead away and support the wounded;
the blood flows for a thousand *li*;
exposed corpses fill the field;

thus victory is decided. This is the lowest use of the military.

Now everyone in the world

knows to work at studying its branches,
and none knows to resolve to cultivate its root.

This is to discard the root and plant the limbs.

Those things that assist the military in victory are many; those that ensure victory are few.

If armor is sturdy and weapons sharp,
chariots are solid and horses excellent,
rations and equipment sufficient,
officers and men numerous,
these are the great foundations of the army, yet victory is not [found] here. If one is clear about
the movements of the stars, planets, sun, and moon;
the rules of recision and accretion[3] and the occult arts;
the advantages of the rear, front, left, and right;
these are aids to warfare, yet completeness is not [found] here.

That by which the excellent commander is ensured victory is his constant possession of a knowledge without origin, a Way that is not a Way. It is difficult to share with the multitude.

15.17

There is no spirit nobler than Heaven;
there is no force more versatile than Earth;
there is no motion more swift than time;
there is no resource more advantageous than people.
These four are the pillars and trunks of the military, yet they must rely on the Way to operate because [the Way] can unite their functions.
The advantage of terrain overcomes Heaven and time;
clever tactics overcome the advantage of terrain;
force overcomes people.
Thus,
one who relies on Heaven can be led astray;
one who relies on Earth can be trapped;
one who relies on time can be pressured;
one who relies on people can be fooled.
Humaneness, courage, trustworthiness, and incorruptibility are the most excellent qualities among people. However,
the brave can be lured;
the humane can be robbed;
the trustworthy are easily cheated;
the incorruptible are easily schemed against.
If the commander of a host has even one of these [flaws], he will be taken captive.

Seen from this perspective, it also is clear that victory in arms is produced by the Pattern of the Way, not by the worthiness of human character.

Thus, deer and elk can be seized by snares;
fish and turtle can be taken by nets;
geese and swans can be collected with the dart and line.

Only to the Formless may nothing be done. For this reason, the sage

lodges in the Sourceless, so his feelings cannot be grasped and observed;
moves in the Formless, so his formations cannot be attained and traced.
He has no model and no protocol;
he does what is appropriate [for what] arrives;
he has no name and no shape;
he fashions [a new] image for [each] alteration.
How deep!
How distant!
Through winter and summer,
through spring and fall,
above reaching the highest branch,
below fathoming the deepest depth,
altering and transforming,
never hesitating or halting,
he sets his mind in the Field of Profound Mystery
and lodges his will in the Spring of the Nine Returns.

Though one has acute eyes, who can detect his feelings?

15.26

Whenever the kingdom has difficulty, from the palace the ruler summons the commander, charging him: “The fate of the altars of the soil and grain are on your person. The kingdom faces a crisis, I wish you to take command and respond to it.”

When the commander has accepted his mandate, [the ruler] orders the Supplicator and Great Diviner to fast, sequestered for three days. Going to the Great Temple, they consult the Magic Tortoise to divine a lucky day for receiving the drums and flags.

The ruler enters the temple portal, faces west, and stands. The commander enters the temple portal, rushes to the foot of the platform,

faces north, and stands.

The sovereign personally grasps the *yue* ax. Holding it by the head, he offers the commander its handle, saying, "From here up to Heaven is controlled by [you,] the commander." [The ruler] again grasps the *fu* ax. Holding it by the head, he offers the commander its handle, saying, "From here down to the Abyss is controlled by [you,] the commander."[4]

When the commander has accepted the *fu* and *yue* axes, he replies,

"[Just as] the kingdom cannot be governed from without,
the army cannot be ruled from within.
[Just as] one cannot serve the ruler with two minds,
one cannot respond to the enemy with a doubtful will.

Since [I,] your minister, have received control from you, I exclusively [wield] the authority of the drums, flags, and *fu* and *yue* axes. I ask nothing in return. I [only] hope that Your Highness likewise will not hand down one word of command to me.

If Your Highness does not agree, I dare not take command.
If Your Highness agrees, I will take my leave and set out."

[The commander] then trims his fingernails, dons funeral garb, and exits through the "ill-augured" portal.[5] He mounts the commander's chariot and arrays the banners and axes, tied as if not [yet] victorious. On meeting the enemy and committing to battle,

he pays no heed to certain death;
he does not have two minds.

For this reason,

he has no Heaven above;
he has no Earth below;
he has no enemy in front;
he has no ruler behind;
he does not seek fame in advancing;
he does not avoid punishment in retreating;
he [seeks] only to protect the people;
his benefit is united with that of the ruler.

This is the treasure of the kingdom, the Way of the superior commander.

If he is like this,
the clever will plan for him;
the brave will fight for him;
their *qi* will scrape the azure clouds;

they will be swift as galloping [steeds].

Thus before weapons have clashed, the enemy is terrified.

If the battle is victorious and the enemy flees, [the commander] thoroughly dispenses rewards for merit. He reassigns his officers, increasing their rank and emolument. He sets aside land and apportions it, making sure it is outside the feudal mound.[6] Last, he judges punishments within the army.

Turning back, he returns to the kingdom, lowering his banners and storing the *fu* and *yue* axes. He makes his final report to the ruler, saying, "I have no further control over the army." He then dons coarse silk and enters seclusion.

[The commander goes] to ask pardon of the ruler. The ruler says, "Spare him." [The commander] withdraws and dons fasting garb. For a great victory, he remains secluded for three years; for a middling victory, two years; for a lesser victory, one year.

That against which the military was used was surely a kingdom without the Way.

Thus

one can triumph in battle without retribution,
take territory without returning it;
the people will not suffer illness;
the commander will not die early;
the five grains will flourish;
the winds and rains will be seasonable;
the battle is won without;
good fortune is born within.

Thus one's reputation will be made, and afterward there will be no further harm.

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1. This is a deliberate pun. The character translated (*xing*) means both "form" and "punishment," and both meanings are being invoked here. The latter sense is that punishing wrongdoing is the ultimate end of the military but that the ultimate fulfillment of this end is achieved when punishments are no longer necessary. The former sense is that "form" (the formation of the army in battle, the form of plans and operations) is the ultimate arbiter of success for the military but that achieving a state of "formlessness" (or accessing the power of the Formless) is the ultimate embodiment of martial skill.

2. "Warring from the temple" alludes to the first chapter of the *Sunzi bingfa*, which discusses the calculations made in the ancestral temple before battle has been joined. The basic notion here is that victory is achieved in the careful preparation before the battle, not in heroics on the battlefield itself.

3. That is, the annual waxing and waning of the yin and yang forces in the universe.
4. The *yue* and *fu* axes are the ruler's military regalia. The conferring of these symbols on the commander represents the transfer of sovereign authority to him for the duration of the campaign.
5. That is, the commander symbolically prepares himself for his own funeral and leaves by the ill-omened northern door of the palace. These acts signify his willingness to die in the ruler's service.
6. In other words, the commander ensures that land given as rewards lies outside the sacred mound used to perform sacrifices to the ancestors of the defeated ruler, in order to avoid angering those ancestral spirits and turning them into malevolent ghosts.

Sixteen and Seventeen

A MOUNTAIN OF PERSUASIONS *AND* A FOREST OF PERSUASIONS

"A Mountain of Persuasions" and "A Forest of Persuasions" demonstrate how to

> skillfully and elegantly penetrate and bore open the blockages and obstructions of the many affairs
> and thoroughly and comprehensively penetrate and pierce the barriers and hindrances of the myriad things,
> proposing analogies and selecting similes,
> distinguishing categories and differentiating forms,

they thereby

> lead and order your awareness,
> loosen and untie what is knotted up,
> and unravel and unwind what is wound up,

so as to illuminate the boundaries of affairs.

"An Overview of the Essentials" (21.2)

As their similar titles suggest, chapter 16, "A Mountain of Persuasions," and chapter 17, "A Forest of Persuasions," are collections of brief, persuasive utterances that share the same literary form and didactic function in the text. Given these similarities, we have chosen to treat these chapters together as a pair, following the example of *Huainanzi* 21, "An Overview of the Essentials," which similarly summarizes these chapters together. Their purpose seems to be to provide a kind of repository of aphorisms (which we refer to here as "persuasions") that could be used in a variety of settings to which the performative aspects of language were crucial, such as in oral deliberation, instruction, and debate. These "talking points" then would give a person engaged in oral argument or instruction a kind of arsenal of well-turned phrases with which to reinforce the rhetorical force of his arguments.

These chapters of the *Huainanzi* are modeled to some extent on the similarly titled chapters 22 and 23, “Shui lin shang” and “Shui lin xia” (A Forest of Persuasions, parts 1 and 2), in the *Hanfeizi*. Another example of the genre is Liu Xiang’s slightly later compilation the *Shuoyuan* (*A Garden of Sayings*), particularly chapter 16, “Tan cong” (A Thicket of Remarks). Some of the persuasions found in these two *Huainanzi* chapters may also be found, in only slightly different form, in the *Hanfeizi* and the *Shuoyuan*. This suggests that such compilations of talking points for would-be public speakers may have been a widespread and highly appreciated Han literary genre.

Sixteen

16.1

The *po* [substantive soul] asked the *hun* [ethereal soul], “How does the Way take physical form?” The *hun* replied, “It takes Nothing There as its physical form.” The *po* asked, “Does Nothing There have a physical form, then?” The *hun* replied, “It does not.” The *po* asked, “If there is Nothing There, how can one apprehend it and be informed about it?” The *hun* replied, “I only have ways to encounter it, that is all. When we look at it, it has no form; when we listen to it, it has no sound. We call it ‘the Dark Mystery.’ The Dark Mystery can be used to refer to the Way, but it is not the Way.” The *po* said, “Now I get it.” Thereupon he turned his gaze inward and reverted to himself. The *hun* said, “Those who have attained the Way have forms that cannot be seen and names that cannot be expressed. *You* still have ‘form’ and ‘name.’ How can you attain the Way?” The *po* said, “What use is speech, then? I shall return to my Ancestor.” The *po* turned to look, and suddenly the *hun* could not be seen. The *po* then turned and got a grip on himself and also entered the formless.

16.8

Sages spend their lives talking about governing. What is of use is not their words [as such] but what they have to say. Singers use lyrics, but what people really enjoy hearing is not the lyrics themselves. A parrot can speak, but it cannot engage in meaningful discourse. Why is this? It has the power of speech but does not have anything to say.

Thus if someone follows you and walks in your tracks, he cannot produce fresh footprints of his own.

16.10

The four directions are the gates and doors, windows and back gates of the Way; which one you go through [determines] how you view things. Thus

fishing can be used to teach someone horseback riding;
horseback riding can be used to instruct a person in charioteering;
and charioteering can be used to teach someone how to pole a boat.

16.18

Orchids grow in dark valleys. They are no less fragrant just because no one [happens to] wear them.
Boats ply rivers and oceans. They are no less buoyant just because no one [happens to] ride in them.
The Superior Man practices Rightness. He does not stop doing so just because no one [happens to] know about it.

16.22

Those who are in prison consider a day a long time.
Those who are about to be executed in the marketplace consider a day to be very short.
The length of a day has a set standard, but
from where one person stands it is short
and from where another stands it is long.
This is because their center is not balanced. Thus when one uses what is not balanced to consider what is balanced, then what one takes to be balanced will not be balanced.

16.28

A good archer shoots and does not miss the target. That is good for the archer, but not good for the target.
A good fisherman never loses a fish. That is good for the fisherman, but not good for the fish.
Thus where there is that which is good, there also is that which is not good.

16.34

If you
grasp a crossbow and call a bird
or brandish a club and beckon a dog,
then what you want to come will surely go away instead. Thus,
a fish cannot be hooked without bait;
an animal cannot be lured with an empty trap.

16.46

A hundred men trying to lift a gourd is not as good as one person grabbing it and running off. Thus there certainly are situations in which a crowd is

not as good as a few people.

Two people pull a cart, and six more push behind. Thus there certainly are affairs in which mutual cooperation is necessary for success.

If two people are drowning, they cannot rescue each other, but if one is on shore, he can [save the other]. Thus identical things cannot set each other in order. It is necessary to depend on difference; only then there will be a good outcome.

16.51

When the ruler wants a plank, his officials cut down a tree.
When the ruler wants a fish, his officials dry up a valley.
When the ruler wants an oar, his underlings give him a whole boat.
When the ruler's words are like threads, his underlings' words are like rope.
When the ruler likes one thing, his underlings praise it twice.
When the ruler faults three [people], his underlings kill nine.

16.67

Someone who wanted to put a stop to slander went from door to door saying, "I really did not have an affair with my elder sister-in-law!" The slander increased more and more.

Trying to stop words with more words
or affairs with more affairs
is like making piles of dirt to ward off dust
or using armloads of firewood to douse a fire.

Spouting words to expunge slander is like using black dye to clean something white.

16.77

In a family to the east, the mother died. Her son cried but was not sorrowful. A son from a family to the west saw this and returned home to his mother, saying, "Mother, why don't you die right away? I would certainly cry very sorrowfully for you!"

Now if someone really wants his mother to die, if she did die, he certainly would not be able to cry sorrowfully for her.

[Likewise,] if someone says, "I have no free time to study," even if he had free time, he would still not be able to study.

16.96

When the majority are crooked, they cannot tolerate the straight;
when the majority are bent, they cannot tolerate the upright.
Thus,
when people are in the majority, they eat wolves;
when wolves are in the majority, they eat people.

16.103

When birds are about to arrive, people spread out nets to await them. What catches the bird is a single eye of the net, but a single-eyed net will never catch a bird.

Now a person who dons armor prepares for an arrow to strike him. If he knew for sure where the arrow would hit, he could wear just one tiny scale of armor.

Matters sometimes cannot be measured beforehand;
things sometimes cannot be foreseen.

Thus sages cultivate the Way and await the right time.

16.114

When you give someone a horse but [first] take off the harness,
when you give someone a chariot but [first] detach the yoke rings,
what you have kept is [worth] little,
and what you have given away is [worth] a lot.

Thus the peasants have a saying: “If you boil beef without salt, you defeat the purpose.”

16.145

A man from Ying was going to sell his mother. He said to a [prospective] buyer, “This mother is old. Please feed her well and don’t let [her life] be bitter.” This is to carry out a large offense against Rightness while hoping to perform a small act of Rightness.

Seventeen

17.1

To apply the standards of a bygone era in governing the world [today] is like a passenger in a boat who lost his sword in midstream. Right away he made a mark on the boat, intending to come back at night to look for the sword. His lack of knowledge of how to sort things out was certainly profound! Now to follow the footprints in one small corner [of the world] and not to know how to wander in accord with Heaven and Earth—no confusion can be greater than that. Just because something is suitable for a particular time is not enough to make it valuable [always]. It can be compared with making earthen dragons in time of drought or making [sacrificial] straw dogs during an epidemic. They are sovereign only at a particular time.

17.15

> The best flavor does not satiate;
> the highest language does not embellish.
> The highest joy does not [elicit] laughter;
> the loftiest sound does not call out.
> The greatest artist does not chop;
> the greatest cook does not carve;
> the greatest hero does not fight.

When you attain the Way, its Potency follows. This is like the correspondence of the [pitch-pipe] note Yellow Bell and the [pentatonic] note *gong*, or the correspondence of the [pitch-pipe] note Great Budding and the [pentatonic] note *shang* —their consonance cannot be altered.[1]

17.32

> The purveyor of coffins desires human illness and plague;
> the hoarder of grain desires yearly drought and famine.

17.42

Metal overcomes wood, but it is not possible to destroy a forest with a single knife.
Earth overcomes water, but it is not possible to plug the Yangzi with one clod of earth.

17.48

Suppose the stride of a rabbit were made as big as that of a horse. It could keep up with the sun and pursue the wind. If [a rabbit] actually became [as big as] a horse, though, it would not be able to run at all.

17.49

In winter there might be thunder and lightning,
and in summer there might be frost and snow.
Nevertheless, the inherent tendencies of heat and cold do not change. Small differences are not enough to hinder constant principles.

17.64

A nursing bitch will bite a tiger;
a brooding hen will peck a fox.
When their [maternal] concern has been aroused, they do not take account of [relative] strengths.

17.84

The markings of tigers and leopards attract archers;
the agility of monkeys and apes brings hunters.

17.122

When you see an elephant's tusk, you know he was bigger than an ox.
When you see a tiger's tail, you know it was bigger than a fox.
One portion appears, and the remaining one hundred portions are known.

17.132

With the wheel hub [properly] set up, each of its thirty spokes makes full use of its strength but does not detract from the others. If you take one spoke alone and set it into the hub, discarding all the others, how would it be possible to go ten thousand *li*?

17.151

Skillfully using others is like the feet of a millipede; though numerous they do not harm one another.

Or like the lips and the teeth, the hard and the soft rub up against each other but do not overcome each other.

17.190

When the traveler thinks [of his loved one] on the road,
the one at home dreams in her bed.
When the kindly mother sighs in Yan [in the north],
her son misses her in Jing [in the south].

These are [cases of] Essence going back and forth.

17.205

To take the immensity of the world and entrust it to the talent of a single person is like hanging a weight of a thousand *jun* on a single branch of a tree.

17.219

Bows must first be adjusted; later you can seek out the strong ones.
Horses must first be trained; later you can seek out the fine ones.
People must first prove trustworthy; later you can seek out the able ones.

17.226

You do not carve a pure white jade;
you do not inscribe a beautiful pearl.

The basic material is more than enough [already].

Thus,

if it strides forth without resting, even a lame turtle can go a thousand *li*;
if you pile things up without stopping, you can amass a great heap.

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1. Yellow Bell and *gong* and Great Budding and *shang* are pairs of identical notes.

Eighteen

AMONG OTHERS

"Among Others" provides the means by which to
observe the alterations of bad and good fortune,
discern the reversals of benefit and harm,
diagnose the symptoms of success and failure,
and mark out and hold up to view the boundaries of ends and beginnings.
[It]
differentiates and distinguishes the subtleties of the one hundred affairs
and discloses and reveals the mechanisms of preservation and loss,
enabling you to know
bad fortune as good fortune,
loss as gain,
success as failure,
and benefit as harm.
If you truly grasp [its] utmost implications, you will possess the means to move to and fro and up and down among the vulgar of the age, while remaining unharmed by slander, abuse, venom, or poison.

"An Overview of the Essentials" (21.2)

Chapter 18 of the *Huainanzi* shares its title, "Ren jian," with chapter 4 of the *Zhuangzi* and could also be translated as "Among Human Beings" or "The Human Realm." As the opening section of the chapter explains, here we have left the internal domain of the mind and nature and entered the multidimensional world of time and space populated by *ren*, "other people," or, simply, "others." For this reason, we translate the title of chapter 18 as "Among Others."

"Among Others" is made up of the same kind of short units of anecdotal prose that constitute chapter 12, "Responses of the Way," most of which are also found in other early anthologies such as the *Lüshi chunqiu*, the *Hanfeizi*, and the *Zhanguo ce* (*Intrigues of the Warring States*). It is not clear whether the *Huainanzi* (and later Han anthologies) drew from these

earlier works or whether all these texts borrowed from a stock of anecdotal lore that circulated in various written and oral forms. Even though chapter 18 shares its composite pieces with these other texts, it uses them quite distinctively.

"Among Others" consists almost entirely of pairs of anecdotes set into a generic framework. Each section of the chapter is set off by a motif composed of two parallel and (typically) opposing propositions, for example, "some [things] are increased by being decreased, some [things] are decreased by being increased" (18.2). The text then presents two anecdotes, the first illustrating the first leg of the motif and the second illustrating the second.

The purposes of chapter 18 were multifold. The *Huainanzi* compilers included it as both an example of elegant literary parallelism and a commentary on the uses and effectiveness of logical disputation (a subject that also informs other chapters, especially 10, 16, and 17). On the one hand, chapter 18 demonstrates that a skillful orator may deploy elegant examples to support almost any side of a question. Thus the efficacy of logical argumentation cannot be completely discounted in the current age. On the other hand, the vagaries of affairs "among others" are so complex and contradictory that "no one who is not a spirit or a sage" can distinguish the origins of "calamity and good fortune." Thus the means to assess the products of logic or literary artistry must be found in more fundamental realms accessible only through mystical self-cultivation.

Eighteen

18.1

The nature of humans is pure, clear, peaceful, and content.
The regulators of affairs are models, gnomons, the compass, and the square.
If you understand the nature of humans, you will not err in nurturing yourself.
If you understand the regulators of affairs, you will not be confused in your taking and giving.
When one end emerges,
it comprehends limitlessly.
Roaming the eight limits,
it gathers it all into a single straw.
It is called "the mind."

Looking at the root and knowing the branches, observing the finger and seeing the return [path], holding to the One and responding to the many, grasping the essentials and ordering the details. These are called "techniques."

What the wise are at rest, where the wise go in motion, what the wise wield in affairs, that from which the wise act: this is known as "the Way."

The Way:
Place it in front, and [the cart] will not lean forward;
place it behind, and [the cart] will not lean backward.
Put in inside a cramped space, and it will not fill it,
Spread it over the world, and it will not be stretched.
For this reason,
what cause others to exalt and praise you are the strengths of the mind.
What cause others to denigrate and slander you are the faults of the mind.
Words that issue from the mouth cannot be halted among others;
actions that are manifest nearby cannot be kept from afar.
Affairs are difficult to complete and easily defeated;
reputation is difficult to establish and easily abandoned.

A thousand-*li* dike will breach because of a cricket or ant burrow;
a hundred-*xun* roof will burn because of a spark from a crack in the chimney.

The *Admonitions of Yao* says, “Trembling and shaking, take heed day by day. People do not stumble over a mountain; they stumble over an anthill.” This is why those who look lightly on small harms and scorn minor affairs will have many regrets. Worrying about a calamity once it has arrived is like a sick person’s searching for a good doctor once he has already become critically ill. Even if [the doctor] has the skill of a Bian Que or a Yu Fu, [the patient] will still not live.

The arrival of calamity is generated by human beings;
the arrival of good fortune is effected by human beings.
Calamity and good fortune share a gateway;
benefit and harm are neighbors.

No one who is not a spirit or sage can distinguish them.

In all people’s undertaking of affairs, none dares set his plans before using his intelligence to reflect and assess. Some lead to benefit, others to harm; this is the difference between the stupid and the wise. Those who thought that they clearly knew the fulcrum of survival and extinction, the portal of calamity and good fortune, and who, having used it, become trapped in difficulty, cannot be counted. If whenever one knew what was right, one’s affair would succeed, there would be no unfinished ventures in the world. For this reason,

intelligence and reflection are the portals of calamity and good fortune;
motion and stillness are the fulcrums of benefit and harm.

The alterations and transformations of the hundred affairs, the order and chaos of the state and the household, wait [for them] to be effected. [For this reason, one who does not fall into difficulty succeeds.] Thus one cannot but take heed of them.

18.7

In olden times, among the people of Song there was [a family] whose [members] were very close. The three generations did not separate. Without warning, the household’s black cow gave birth to a white calf. They asked the grandfather and he said, “This is a good omen. Offer it up to the ghosts and spirits.” After one year, the father suddenly went blind, and the cow again gave birth to a white calf. The father again sent his son to consult the

grandfather. His son said, “Before we listened to grandfather and you lost your sight. If we consult him again now, what will happen?” His father said, “According to the words of the sages, one must first scrutinize and then adopt. The affair is not yet clear; we must still try asking him once more.” The son again went to consult the grandfather. The grandfather said, “This is a good omen. I again instruct you to offer it to the ghosts and spirits.” [The son] returned to convey these orders to his father. The father said, “Carry out grandfather’s instructions.” In one year, the son also suddenly went blind. Afterward Chu attacked Song, besieging the city. At this time, people traded their children for food; they cut up corpses and cooked them. The able and strong were dead; the old, sick, and children all had to mount the city walls. They defended them without failing. The king of Chu was furious. When the walls were breached, all those defending them were slaughtered. It was only because the father and son were blind that they did not mount the walls. When the army retired and the siege was lifted, both the father and son [regained] their vision.

As for the revolutions and the mutual generation of calamity and good fortune, their alterations are difficult to perceive. At the near frontier, there was a [family of] skilled diviners whose horse suddenly became lost out among the Hu [people]. Everyone consoled them. The father said, “This will quickly turn to good fortune!” After several months, the horse returned with a fine Hu steed. Everyone congratulated them. The father said, “This will quickly turn to calamity!” The household was [now] replete with good horses; the son loved to ride, [but] he fell and broke his leg. Everyone consoled them. The father said, “This will quickly turn to good fortune!” After one year, the Hu people entered the frontier in force; the able and strong all stretched their bowstrings and fought. Among the people of the near frontier, nine out of ten died. It was only because of lameness that father and son protected each other. Thus,

good fortune becoming calamity,
calamity becoming good fortune;
their transformations are limitless,
so profound they cannot be fathomed.

18.8

Some are correct in word yet not comprehensive in action; some are faulty of ear and stubborn of mind yet accord with substance.

Gaoyang Tui was about to build a house, [so] he consulted a carpenter. The carpenter replied, “It cannot be done yet. The wood is still living. If plaster is applied to it, it will definitely warp. When green material is covered with heavy plaster it may [seem] completed now, [but] it will definitely collapse later.” Gaoyang Tui said, “Not so. As the wood dries, it gets harder; as the plaster dries, it gets lighter. When hard material is covered with light plaster, even though it is bad now, it will certainly be better later.” The carpenter was out of words, he had no reply. He accepted his orders and built the house. When it was completed, it was apparently fine, but afterward it indeed collapsed. This is what is known as “correct in word yet not comprehensive in action.”

What is called faulty of ear [and] stubborn of mind yet according with substance? Lord Jingguo was about to fortify Xue. Most of his guest clients tried to stop him; he did not listen to them. He told his heralds, “Send no word from my guest clients.” A man of Qi requested an audience, saying, “I will speak only three words. If I surpass three words, please cook me [alive].” Lord Jingguo heard this and granted him an audience. The guest rushed forward, bowed twice, and rising, said, “Great sea fish,” then retreated. Lord Jingguo stopped him, staying, “I want to hear your persuasion.” The guest said, “I do not dare die for sport.” Lord Jingguo said, “You, honored sir, have paid no heed to distance in coming here, I want you to explain it to me.” The guest said, “The great sea fish: nets cannot stop it, hooks cannot catch it. [But] if it beaches and is out of the water, then crickets and ants will have their way with it. Now Qi is your sea. If you lose Qi, do you think that Xue can survive alone?” Lord Jingguo said, “Excellent” and thereby halted the fortification of Xue. This is what is called “being faulty of ear and stubborn of mind, yet attaining the substance in action.”

Now using “do not fortify Xue” as a persuasion to halt the fortification of Xue was not as good as “great sea fish.”

Thus things

sometimes are distant yet near to it,
sometimes are near yet far off the mark.

18.27

The juxtapositions of the categories of things so that they are close [to one another] but of a different family are numerous and difficult to recognize.

Thus

some are placed in categories to which they do not belong;
some are excluded from categories to which they do belong.
Some seem so and are not;
some are not and seem so.

A proverb says, “When a hawk dropped a rotten mouse, the Yu clan was lost.” What does this mean? It is said that the Yu clan were tycoons of Liang. Their household was replete with riches; they had limitless gold and coins, immeasurable wealth and goods. They raised a lofty tower on the edge of the highway on which they staged musical [performances], served wine, and played games of chess. As some wandering swordsmen passed under the tower together, one of the chess players above moved against his friend’s position and laughed as he turned over two pieces. [Just at that moment] a flying hawk dropped a rotten mouse as it passed and hit the wandering swordsmen.

The wandering swordsmen said to one another, “The Yu clan’s days of wealth and happiness have been long, and they often are scornful of other people’s will. We did not dare to disturb them, yet they insult us with a dead mouse. If this is not avenged, we will not be able to stand and proclaim ourselves to the world. Let us unite our strength to a single purpose, lead all our followers, and resolve to exterminate their house.” That night they attacked the Yu clan and exterminated the house. This is what is called “placing it in a category in which it does not belong.”

What is called “excluding [it] from a category to which [it] does [belong]”? Qu Jian told Shi Qi, “Duke Sheng of Bo is about to rebel.” Shi Qi said, “Not so. Duke Sheng of Bo humbles his person and exalts knights; he would not dare treat the worthy arrogantly. His house lacks the safeguards of keys and locks or the security of crossbars and bolts. He uses oversized *dou* and *hu* [measures] in distributing [grain] and undersized *jin* and *liang* [weights] when collecting [it]. Your assessment of him is inaccurate.” Qu Jian replied, “These [conditions] are precisely why he will rebel.” After three years, Duke Sheng of Bo indeed did rebel, killing Prime Minister Zijiao and Minister of War Ziqi. This is what is called “being excluded from a category yet belonging to it.”

What is called “seeming so and yet not”? Zifa was the magistrate of Shangcai. A common person committed a crime and faced punishment. The case was disputed and the arguments made. When it was decided before the

magistrate, Zifa sighed with a pitiful heart. When the criminal had been punished, he did not forget Zifa's kindness. After this, Zifa committed a crime against King Wei and fled. The man who had been punished thus disguised the one who had been kind to him, and the man who had been kind fled with him to a hut below the city walls. When pursuers arrived, [the man] stamped his foot and said angrily, "Zifa oversaw and decided my crime and had me punished; my hatred for him makes my bones and marrow ache. If I could get his flesh and eat it, I could never have enough!" The pursuers all felt he was truthful and did not search the interior, so Zifa survived. This is what is called "seeming so and yet not."

What is called "not yet seeming so"? In antiquity, King Goujian of Yue humbled himself to King Fuchai of Wu. He asked to serve [Fuchai] personally as his minister and to give [Fuchai] his wife as concubine. He supplied the four seasonal sacrifices and remanded tribute every spring and autumn. He took down [his own state's] altars of the soil and grain, exerted his energies [like a] commoner, lived in seclusion, and fought in the front ranks. He was extremely humble in all courtesies and extremely submissive in all speech. He distanced himself far from the mind of a rebel, yet with three thousand men he captured Fuchai at Guxu.

One cannot fail to examine these four cases. What makes it difficult to understand affairs is that [people] hide their origins and conceal their tracks; they establish the selfish in the place of the impartial; they incline toward the deviant over the correct and confuse other people's minds with victory. If one could make what people harbor internally tally perfectly with what they express externally, then the world would have no lost states or broken households. When the fox catches the pheasant, it must first prostrate its body and lower its ears and wait for [the pheasant] to come. The pheasant sees this and believes it, thus it can be enticed and captured. If the fox were to widen its eyes and stare directly [at the pheasant], manifesting its lethal inclination, the pheasant would know to be alarmed and fly far off, thus escaping [the fox's] wrath.

The mutual deception of human artifice
is not merely the cunning of birds and beasts.

The resemblances between things and categories that cannot be externally assessed are numerous and difficult to recognize. For this reason, they cannot but be investigated.

Nineteen

CULTIVATING EFFORT

"Cultivating Effort" provides the means by which those
whose entry into the Way is not profound
and whose appreciation of argumentation is not deep
can, by observing these literary expressions, turn themselves around
to take clarity and purity as constants
and mildness and serenity as roots.
[But those who]
idly and lazily set aside their studies,
give free rein to their desires and indulge their feelings.
and wish to misappropriate what they lack,
will be obstructed from the Great Way.
Now,
madmen have no anxiety,
and sages, too, have no anxiety.
Sages have no anxiety
because they harmonize by means of Potency,
whereas madmen have no anxiety
because they do not know [the difference between] bad and good fortune.
Thus,
the non-action of those who fully comprehend [the Way]
and the non-action of those who are obstructed from [the Way]
are alike with regard to their non-action
but differ with regard to the means by which they are non-active.
Thus, on their behalf, what can be heeded has been brought to the surface, declared, circulated, and explained, thereby inspiring scholars to diligently appropriate [these principles] for themselves.

"An Overview of the Essentials" (21.2)

"Cultivating Effort" offers arguments that can be used to challenge a number of political and philosophical views that seem to have been in

vogue at the time the *Huainanzi* was created. Together, these arguments support the general theme of the chapter, that cultivating effort is necessary in a wide variety of contexts and among a wide variety of people, from the sage who tries to bring benefit to the world to the common man who tries to lift himself morally through education and training. Rhetorically, the chapter provides the reader with valuable examples of techniques of assertion and refutation that can be used in oral debate. Accordingly, the chapter is a teaching tool in form as well as in content. Each of the chapter's seven sections lays out a sustained argument that begins by asserting or refuting a particular proposition. In every case, personal effort is seen to be indispensable even when it pertains to the key concept of "non-action" (*wuwei*), advocated throughout the *Huainanzi* as a technique of sagely government. Here "non-action" is redefined to highlight the importance of human agency and human exertion.

The opening lines of this chapter comprise an interesting and unusual case in which the *Huainanzi* seems to directly contradict itself. Chapter 8, "The Basic Warp," begins by stating, "The reign of Grand Purity was harmonious and compliant and thus silent and indifferent." Chapter 19 begins, "Some people say: 'Those who are non-active are solitarily soundless and indifferently unmoving. . . .' I believe this is not so." How can we account for this discrepancy? The answer, we believe, is that these statements must be viewed in context, for when they are, the apparent contradiction tends to disappear. Chapter 8 refers to a simple, remote (and unrecoverable) era in which everyone was so attuned to the Way that a ruler had only to reign in order to rule. Chapter 19, though, refers to a much more complicated contemporary world in which a do-nothing ruler would not stay on his throne for long. The author of "Cultivating Effort" does not deny the principle of *wuwei* (non-action), but he denies that it means doing nothing. Rather, he shows, the great sages of antiquity worked hard. It is just that their efforts were so attuned to the Way that the good consequences of their acts became a cosmic imperative. (In this way, chapter 19 is consistent with chapter 13, which insists that a successful ruler must constantly embrace and respond to change.)

The *Huainanzi* is, above all, intended as a practical guide to good rulership. Here the author makes clear that the ruler's self-cultivation, preparation, education, and hard work all are indispensable elements of good and lasting government.

Nineteen

19.1

Some people say: “Those who are non-active
are solitarily soundless
and indifferently unmoving.
Pull them, and they do not come;
push them, and they do not go.
Only those who are like this give the appearance of having attained the Way.”

I believe this is not so. I might ask them: “Is it possible to refer to such men as the Divine Farmer, Yao, Shun, Yu, and Tang as sages?’ [Even] those who hold to this view [of non-action] certainly could not contend otherwise. [But] if you examine these five sages, it is clear that none of them achieved non-action.

In ancient times,
the people fed on herbaceous plants and drank [only] water,
picked fruit from shrubs and trees
and ate the meat of oysters and clams.
They frequently suffered tribulations from feverish maladies and injurious poisons. Consequently, the Divine Farmer first taught the people to plant and cultivate the five grains.

He evaluated the suitability of the land,
[noting] whether it was dry or wet, fertile or barren, high or low.
He tried the taste and flavor of the one hundred plants
and the sweetness or bitterness of the streams and springs,
issuing directives so the people would know what to avoid and what to accept. At the time [he was doing this], he suffered poisoning [as many as] seventy times a day.

Yao established filial piety, compassion, humaneness, and love, inspiring the people to become like sons and brothers.

To the west, he taught the People of the Fertile Lands;
to the east, he reached the Blackteeth People;
to the north, he soothed the Yudu People;

and to the south he made inroads to Jiaozhi.
He exiled Huan Dou to Mount Chong,
pursued the Three Miao [tribes] to Three Dangers [Mountain],
banished Gong Gong to Yuzhou,
and executed Gun at Feather Mountain.
Shun created homes.
Constructing walls and thatching roofs,
opening lands and planting grains,
he directed all the people
to abandon their caves and
each to establish a family dwelling.
These are the practices he initiated.
To the south he chastised the Three Miao [tribes],
dying along the way at Zangwu.
Yu,
bathed by torrential rains
and combed by violent winds,
cleared the waterways and dredged the rivers,
bored through Dragon Gate,
opened up Yin Pass,
repaired the embankments of Peng Li [i.e., Boyang Lake],
mounted the four vehicles,[1]
followed the mountains,
and marked their trees,
leveling and ordering the water and land
so as to determine [the boundaries of] the eighteen hundred states.
Tang
rose early and retired late
to take full advantage of his perspicacious intelligence;
reduced taxes and lightened demands
to enhance the people's livelihood;
displayed virtue and bestowed favor
to rescue the impoverished and bereft.
He mourned the dead and inquired about the afflicted
to take care of orphans and widows.
[Consequently,]
the common people grew close to and cleaved to him.

His policies and directives flowed forth and circulated [everywhere]. Thus he subsequently

marshaled his troops at Mingtiao,
surrounded [Jie] of the Xia at Nan Guo,
punished him for his transgressions,
and banished him to Mount Li.

These five sages were rulers who made the world flourish. They labored their bodies and used their minds to the utmost on behalf of the people to bring benefit and eradicate harm, yet they never tired of doing so.

Now if you raise a beaker of wine,
no one would notice [the strain] from your face,
but if you lift a vat [weighing] a *dan*, sweat will flow profusely.

How much more so will this be the case if you take on the worries of the world
and assume responsibility for all the affairs within the [Four] Seas!
This is far heavier than a vat weighing a *dan*.

Moreover, these sages
were not embarrassed by their humble status
but regretted that the Way did not prevail;
were not anxious about their brief life spans
but worried that the people were impoverished.
For this reason,

when Yu acted on the waterways,
he used his own body to break through the banks of the Yangxu [River];
and Tang, at the time of the great drought,
offered himself as a sacrifice at the edge of Mulberry Forest.

If the sages' solicitousness for the people was as clear as this, is it not deluded to accuse them [of being] "non-active"?

Furthermore, in ancient times
when emperors and kings were established, it was not to serve and nourish their [own] desires;
when sages took office, it was not to indulge and delight their own persons.
It was because in the world,

the strong oppressed the weak,
the many violated the few,

the clever deceived the ignorant,
and the brave dispossessed the timid.
Those who possessed knowledge did not impart it;
those who accumulated wealth did not distribute it.

Thus the Son of Heaven was established in order to equalize them.

Since one person's intelligence was not sufficient to shed light on all things within the [Four] Seas, the Three Dukes and the Nine Ministers were established to aid and assist him.

Since inaccessible states with varied customs and remote and secluded locales could not receive and be enriched by the ruler's virtue, Lords of the Land were established to instruct and admonish them.

This made it so that
no land was untended,
no season was not [met with its proper] response,
no official concealed his activities,
no state neglected to benefit [the people].

By these means, they clothed the cold and fed the hungry, nourished the old and infirm, and gave respite to those wearied from their labors.

[Moreover,] if you look at the sages from the perspective of the common man, then
[the cook] Yi Yin, with cauldron on his back, sought to serve Tang;
[the butcher] Lü Wang, with carving knife in hand, entered Zhou [to serve as a high official];
Baili Xi was sold back to [Duke Mu of] Qin;
Guan Zhong was tied and fettered [and taken to the court of Duke Huan of Qi].
Confucius's stove was not black,
and Mozi's mat was not warm.[2]

Thus it is that sages
do not consider mountains high,
do not consider rivers wide.

They withstand insult and humiliation in order to seek to serve a ruler of their age. They do not crave high salaries or covet official posts but instead want to work to advance the world's benefits and eradicate the common people's hardships. In a work that has been transmitted to us it is written:

"The Divine Farmer was haggard and downcast;
Yao was emaciated and forlorn;

Shun was weather-beaten and dark;
and Yu had calloused hands and feet."

Looking at it from this perspective, the sages' anxious toiling for the common people is profound indeed. Thus from the Son of Heaven down to the common people, when

the four limbs are not exercised
and thought and forethought [are] not applied,

yet the tasks of governance are addressed and resolved—such a thing has never been heard of.

19.7

Those who fully comprehend things cannot be startled by the unusual;
those who are versed in the Way cannot be moved by the strange;
those who examine words cannot be dazzled by their designations;
those who investigate into forms cannot be misled by their appearances.

People who follow the conventions of the present age mostly revere the ancient and scorn the present. Thus those who formulate [teachings of] the Way necessarily ascribe them to the Divine Farmer or the Yellow Emperor; only then will they proceed with their discussion. Muddled rulers of chaotic eras venerate what is remote and what proceeds therefrom, so they value such things. Those who study are blinded by their theories and respect [only] what they have heard.

Facing one another,

seated with a dignified air they praise [the ancients];
stiff-necked they recite [the ancient texts].

This shows that the distinction between what is true and what is false is not clear.

Now,
without a square and a compass, even Xi Zhong could not determine square and round;
without a level and a marking cord, even Lu Ban could not straighten the crooked.
Thus,
when Zhongzi Qi died, Bo Ya broke the strings and destroyed his *qin,*
knowing that in his times no one could appreciate his playing.

> When Hui Shi died, Zhuangzi ceased to talk, perceiving that there was no one else with whom he could converse.

At the age of seven, Xiang Tuo became Confucius's teacher. From time to time, Confucius listened to his words. If someone this young were to offer a persuasion to a village elder, though, the child would not have time to duck a blow on the head. How would he be able to illuminate the Way [under such circumstances]?

In the past, Xiezi had an audience with King Hui of Qin, and the king was pleased with him. He asked Tang Guliang about him. Tang Guliang said, "Xiezi is a debater from Shandong who uses clever persuasions to gain the confidence of young princes." King Hui accordingly hid his anger and awaited Xiezi. The next day when Xiezi had a second audience, the king rejected him and would not heed him. It is not that [Xiezi's] persuasion differed but that the way in which the king heard it changed.

> If you mistake [the note] *zhi* for [the note] *yu,* it is not the fault of the string;
> if you mistake a sweet taste for a bitter one, it is not the mistake of the flavor.

A man from Chu had some boiled monkey meat that he gave to his neighbors. They thought it was dog meat and found its flavor pleasing. Later, when they heard it was monkey, they knelt down and vomited all they had eaten. This was a case of not even beginning to know about flavor.

A music master from Handan made up a new tune and said it was composed by Li Qi. All the people vied to learn it. Later when they discovered it was not written by Li Qi, they all abandoned the tune. This was a case of not even beginning to know about music.

A country fellow found a rough piece of jade. Being pleased by its appearance, he considered it to be precious and hid it away. When he showed it to others, people considered that it was just a stone, so he threw it away. This was a case of not even beginning to know about jade.

Thus when your [views] tally with what is essential, you will value what is true and [give] equal [consideration to] the present and the ancient. If you do not have the means to heed persuasions, then you will value what has come down from the past, [simply] because it is remote. This is why [Bian] He cried so hard that he bled at the foot of Mount Jing.

Now,

a sword may be broken off and bent, thin and scratched, chipped and broken, and warped and twisted, but if it said to have been the sword of King Qingxiang of Chu, then it is prized, and the people will compete to wear it.

A *qin* may be twangy and sharp, crooked and bent, with its resonance gone and its aftertones excessive, but if it is said to have been the *qin* of King Zhuang of Chu, then it is [prized], and the favored will contend to play it.

Although the short-handled spears from Mount Miao and the [cast-iron] spear points of Sheepshead [Mountain] can cut through a dragon boat in the water and pierce armor of rhinoceros hide on land, no one wears them on his belt.

Although *qins* made of mountain *tong* wood with sounding boards of rivervalley catalpa wood may sound as pure, lingering and clear as [the music of] Master Tang or Bo Ya, no one plays them.

Those with penetrating discernment are not like this.

> The swordsman hopes for a sharp blade; he does not hope for [the perfection of] a Moyang or a Moye;
> the horseman hopes for a thousand *li* [steed]; he does not hope for [the perfection of] Hualiu or Lü'er;
> the *qin* player hopes for a pure, lingering, and clear sound; he does not hope for [the perfection of] Lanxie or Haozhong.[3]

One who [studies by] reciting the *Odes* and the *Documents* hopes to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the Way and a general knowledge of things; he does not hope for [the perfection of] a "Great Plan" or an "Ode of Shang."

Sages perceive what is true and what is false, just as

> what is white and black is distinguished by the eye
> and what is high pitched and low pitched is differentiated by the ears.

But most people are not like this. Within themselves they lack a master [by means of which] to make [such] discernments. It is like a man who is born after his father dies. When [in later years] he climbs the tomb mound, he will wail and cry as ceremony demands, but nothing makes [those feelings] cleave to his heart.

Thus,

> when a boy and his twin look alike, only their mother can distinguish them.

When jade and [ordinary] stone are of the same sort, only a fine craftsman can identify them.

When texts and chronicles record strange things, only sages can discuss them.

Now, if we should get a new text from a sage and attribute it to Confucius or Mozi, then those disciples who point to every sentence and accept the text [as genuine] will certainly be numerous. Thus

a beauty need not be of the same type as Xi Shi;

a knowledgeable scholar need not be of the same sort as Confucius or Mozi.

If his mind has the perspicacious capacity to penetrate things, then he will write books to illustrate matters, and they will be taken up by the learned. A scholar who truly attains clear-minded understanding, who grasps the profound mirror in his mind, illuminating things brilliantly and not changing his mind on account of [whether something is] ancient or current, will accordingly propound his writings and clearly point out [his views]. Then, even though his coffin might close, he would have no regrets.

Formerly Duke Ping of Jin ordered his officials to make [a set of] bells. When they were finished and presented to Music Master Kuang, the latter said, “The bells are not in tune.”

Duke Ping said, “I have shown them to skilled persons, and they all think they are in tune. Yet you think they are not. Why?”

Music Master Kuang said, “If they are for those of later generations who have no knowledge of the notes, then they will do; but for those who know the notes, they will certainly know they are not in tune.” Thus Music Master Kuang’s wish for well-tuned bells was for those of later generations who knew the notes.

The [people of the] Three Dynasties acted the same as we do, and the Five Hegemons had the same level of intelligence as we. [But] they alone had the reality of sagely knowledge, while we lack even

the reputation of a country village

or the common knowledge of a poor lane.

Why? [It is because] they set themselves straight and established their integrity, while we are rude idlers and lazy layabouts.

Now Mao Qiang and Xi Shi were recognized by the world as beauties, but if they were made to

carry putrid rats in their mouths

and be wrapped in hedgehog skins,
and dress in leopard fur,[4]
with waist sashes of dead snakes,

even cloth-wearing, leather-belted [ordinary] people passing by all would look off to the left or right and hold their noses. But if we were to let them

wear perfume and unguents,
adjust their moth eyebrows,[5]
put on hair clasps and earrings,
dress in fine silk,
and trail [sleeves of] Qi silk gauze,
with white face powder and black mascara,
wearing jade sash-bangles,
walking with gliding steps,
wearing sprigs of fragrant angelica,
with enticing looks,
bewitching smiles,
haunting glances,
speaking delicately and softly,
exposing their beautiful teeth,
twitching the dimples in their cheeks,

then even among the great statesmen of the royal court, whose conduct displays a stern will and haughty air, there would be none who would not court these beauties, long for them, and desire to have sex with them.

Nowadays a person of average talent, benighted by ignorant and deluded wisdom, cloaked in insulting and shameful conduct, who has no training in his own calling or in the techniques that are his responsibility—how could he not make people look askance at him and hold their noses?

Now dancers twirl their bodies like rings of jade. They bend and touch the ground and turn quickly and nimbly. As they move, they twist and turn, lithe and beautiful, imitating spirits.

Their bodies seem as light as wind-borne autumn floss,
their hair like banners flapping in the wind,
their steps are quick as those of a racehorse.

Acrobats, raising poles of *wu* [*tong*] or catalpa wood and grasping crooked tree branches, are as uninhibited as monkeys. Laughing, they pull the leaves toward them; crouching and stretching like dragons, they perch on the branches like swallows. Holding thick tree limbs, they raise them

effortlessly. As they dance, they rise like dragons or birds as they gather. They grasp and release; how fast they move!

There is no one among the spectators who does not grow faint at heart and weak in the knees. Meanwhile, the performers continue their act with a smile and then put on the costumes for the feather dance.

> The dancers do not [inherently] have such supple and nimble [bodies];
> the acrobats do not [inherently] have such keenness and strength.

It was the gradual, long-term practice and training that made them so. Thus,

> when a tree grows, no one sees its progress; at a certain point, we realize that it has grown tall.
> If a hard object is continually [sharpened] on a whetstone, no one sees it diminishing, but at some point we realize that it is thinner.

Pigweed and hyssop grow by leaps and bounds, each day adding several inches. But they cannot be used for the crossbeams of a building. With hardwoods [like] lindera, southernwood, or camphor, only after seven years can their growth be recognized. Then they can be used to make coffins and boats.

Thus, matters

> that can be accomplished easily gain small fame for the one who does them;
> [those] that are difficult to accomplish gain great merit.

The Superior Man cultivates his good points. Even though there might not be an [immediate] advantage, good fortune will come later. Thus the *Odes* says,

> "The days pass and the months proceed;
> through study of brightness and brilliance,
> I gain radiance and light."

This is what is referred to here.

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1. Most of the several explanations of the "four vehicles" include boats for water and carts for land. The remaining ones might be a mud sledge, a vehicle or shoes especially useful in climbing mountains, another kind of mud sledge, and a sedan chair.
2. Confucius's stove was not black and Mozi's mat was not warm because their duties as teachers so often took them away from home.
3. Moyang and Moye were famous swords; Hualiu and Lü'er were famous horses; and Lanxie and Haozhong were famous *qin*. Each was an exemplar of perfection.
4. In this context, the connotation is of masculinity and perhaps barbarism, not of luxury or feminine elegance.
5. Moth eyebrows were artificial eyebrows applied with makeup.

Twenty

THE EXALTED LINEAGE

"The Exalted Lineage"
traverses the eight end points,
extends to the highest heights,
illuminates the three luminaries above,
and harmonizes water and earth below.
It aligns the Way of past and present,
orders the hierarchy of human relationships and patterns,
summarizes the tenets of the myriad regions,
and returns them home to a single root,
thereby
knotting the net of the Way of Governance
and weaving the web of the affairs of the True King.
[It] then
traces to the source the techniques of the mind,
sets in order instinct and nature,
and thereby
provides a lodging place for the numen of Clarity and Equanimity.
It clarifies and purifies the quintessence of spirit illumination,
thereby enfolding and cleaving to the harmony of Heaven.
It provides the means to observe how the Five Thearchs and the Three Kings
embraced the heavenly *qi*,
cherished the Heavenly Heart,
and grasped centrality and savored harmony.
Their Moral Potency having taken shape within [them],
it then cohered Heaven and Earth,
issued forth and aroused yin and yang,
ordered the four seasons,
rectified the changeable directions,
calmed things with its tranquillity,

and extended them with its efficaciousness.
[Their Moral Potency] then thereby
fired and smelted the myriad things,
buoyed up and transformed the innumerable life forms,
singing forth, they harmonized,
moving about, they followed along,
so that all things within the Four Seas with a single mind unanimously offered their allegiance.
Thus,
lucky stars appeared,
auspicious winds arrived,
the Yellow Dragon descended,
phoenix nests lined the trees,
and the *qilin* tarried in the open fields.
Had Moral Potency not taken shape within [them],
yet their laws and tributes were implemented,
and their regulations and measures were employed exclusively,
then the spirits and divinities would not have responded to them;
good fortune and blessings would not have returned home to them;
all things within the Four Seas would not have submitted to them;
and subjects would not have been transformed by them.
Thus,
Moral Potency that takes shape within
is the great foundation of governance.
This is [the message of] "The Exalted Lineage" of the *Profoundly Illustrious.*

"An Overview of the Essentials" (21.2)

With this final substantive chapter of the *Huainanzi*, the reader is invited to "knot the net of the Way of Governance and weave the web . . . of the True King," thus rounding off his education. "The Exalted Lineage" reminds the young monarch, who is the intended audience of the entire book and who presumably aspires to sagely rule, that the "Moral Potency that takes shape within is the great foundation of governance." Moreover, this chapter makes clear that such internally generated Moral Potency has far-reaching cosmopolitical implications affecting both Heaven above and the people below. In making its case, the chapter identifies for the reader a number of

exemplary rulers of both the recent and the remote past who embodied these ideals and thereby brought order and harmony to the wider world.

As the chapter title suggests, these great rulers are seen as being part of a virtual lineage culminating in the rulers of the present Han dynasty, the Liu clan (of which the *Huainanzi*'s sponsor-editor, Liu An, was himself a prominent member). Not surprisingly, whereas many earlier chapters of the *Huainanzi* drew, in various ways, on the whole corpus of pre-Han and early Han literature, the principal source for this chapter is the *Huainanzi* itself. This long and rhetorically rich chapter recapitulates many of the themes and concepts associated with sage-rulership found in earlier chapters of the *Huainanzi*, and so it brings this great work to a close.

Twenty

20.1

Heaven

established the sun and moon,
arranged the stars and planets,
harmonized the yin and yang,
and displayed the four seasons.
The day serves to blaze things with sunlight;
the evening serves to give them respite;
the wind serves to dry things out,
and the rain and dew serve to moisten them.
In giving life to things, no one sees the means by which it nurtures them and yet things reach maturity.
In taking life away from things, no one sees the means by which it sends them off to death and yet things cease to exist.

This is called “spirit illumination.” Sages take it as their model. Thus,

when they initiate good fortune, no one sees from whence it originates and yet it arises.
When they eradicate calamity, no one sees the means by which they do so and yet it disappears.
Move away from it; it nears.
Approach it; it recedes.
Search for it; it will not be obtained.
Examine into it; it is not insubstantial.
Reckon it by days; it is incalculable.
Reckon it by years; there is surplus.

20.3 (in part)

When the High Ancestors went into mourning, for three years they did not speak, and all within the Four Seas were silent and voiceless. [But] as soon as a single word was uttered, [they] greatly moved the world. This is because they relied on their Heavenly Heart when opening and closing their

mouths. Thus, as soon as you stimulate the root, the hundred branches all respond. It is like the spring rains watering the myriad things;

turbulently they flow,
copiously they spread out;
there is no place that is not moistened
and no plant that does not thrive.

Thus, when the sage embraces his Heavenly Heart, his voice can move and transform the world. Thus, when his Quintessential Sincerity is stimulated within, an embodied *qi* responds in Heaven:

Lucky stars appear,
yellow dragons descend,
auspicious winds arrive,
sweet springs appear,
excellent grains thrive,
rivers do not fill and overflow,
and the seas do not churn and roil.

Thus the *Odes* says,

"Nurturing and yielding are the hundred spirits
even to the rivers and mountain peaks."

When you oppose heaven and oppress the myriad things,

the sun and moon [suffer] partial eclipses;
the five planets lose their proper orbits;
the four seasons overstep one another.
In the day it is dark and at night it is light;
mountains crumble and rivers flood;
in winter there are thunderstorms, and in summer there are frosts.

The *Odes* says,

"In the first month, frost is abundant;
my heart is anxious and grieved."

20.5

Now with regard to ghosts and spirits,

we look for them, but they are without form;
we listen for them, but they are without voice;

yet we perform the Suburban Sacrifice to Heaven and the [appropriate] observances to the mountain and river [spirits].

With prayer and sacrifice we seek prosperity;

with invocations and charms we seek rain;
with tortoise shell and milfoil we decide matters.
The *Odes* says,
"When the spirits might descend
cannot be calculated.
How can you treat them with disdain?"

20.10

Heaven, Earth, and the four seasons do not [purposefully] produce the ten thousand things.

Spirit and illumination join,
yin and yang harmonize,

and the myriad things are born. When a sage rules the world, he does not change the people's nature but soothes and facilitates the nature that is already present and purifies and cleanses it. Thus following [the nature of things] may be considered great, whereas making [things] may be considered minor.

Yu dredged the Dragon Gate, broke through Yique, demarcated the Yangzi River, and channeled the Yellow River [so that] they ran eastward into the sea, by following the [natural] flow of water.

Lord Millet reclaimed the grasslands and introduced tillage, fertilized the soil and planted grain, enabling each of the five grains to grow appropriately, by following the propensity of the soil.

Tang and Wu, with three hundred armored chariots and three thousand soldiers in armor, quelled the violent and rebellious and brought Xia and Shang under control, by following the people's desire.

Thus if you can follow [the nature of things], you will be matchless in the world.

Now if things first have what is natural to them, afterward human affairs can be governed.

Thus,
a fine carpenter cannot carve metal,
and a skillful blacksmith cannot melt wood.
The propensity of metal is that it cannot be carved,
and the nature of wood is that it cannot be melted.
You can
mold clay into a vessel,

gouge out wood and make a boat,
forge iron and make a blade,
cast metal and make a bell,

by following their [inherent] possibilities.

You can

drive a horse and lead an ox,
use a rooster to announce night's end,
and tell a dog to guard the gate—

because it follows their natures.

People have a nature that is fond of sex, so there is the ceremony of marriage.

They have a nature that [requires] food and drink, so there is the suitability of a great banquet.

They have a nature that delights in music, so there are the sounds of bells, drums, pipes, and strings.

They have a nature to grieve and be melancholy, so there are the customs of wearing mourning clothes, crying, and jumping about [at funerals].

Therefore, the institutions and laws of the former kings followed what the people liked but [also] established controls and civilizing [restrictions] for them.

Following along with people's fondness for sex, they set up the rites of marriage so men and women could be [properly] separated.

Following along with their delight in music, they rectified the sounds of the "Ya" and "Song" so that habits and customs would not be unrestrained.

Following along with their preference to live as families and find joy in their wives and children, they taught filial piety so that fathers and sons would be affectionate.

Following along with their delight in friendship, they taught brotherly love so that older and younger would be in proper standing with each other.

Only after this did they

use court ceremonies to clarify high rank and low

and use rural libations[1] and archery contests to clarify adulthood and youth.

In season, [the youths] held exercises to practice using weapons or entered school according to their station to learn to cultivate the arts of human relations.

These all are cases in which people already possessed [qualities] by nature, which sages fashioned and completed.

Thus if the nature is not there, it is not possible to educate or train [a person]. If the nature is there but has not been nurtured, he cannot follow the Way.

> It is the nature of the silkworm to make silk, but unless you have a skilled female worker to boil the cocoon in hot water and draw its filaments, there can be no silk.
>
> An egg transforms into a chick, but unless you have a mother hen to sit on and warm the egg and brood it for several days, it cannot produce a chick.

Human nature is endowed with Humaneness and Rightness, but unless you have a sage to institute laws and standards to teach and guide them, people will not be able to find the correct path.

> Thus the teaching of the former kings was
> to follow what people delight in so as to encourage goodness and
> to follow what people hate so as to prohibit wickedness. Thus,
> punishments and penalties were not used, but awe-inspiring conduct seemed to flow forth [everywhere].
>
> Policies and ordinances were limited, but their transforming brilliance [pervaded] as if they were spiritlike.

Thus if you follow nature, the whole world will come along with you. If you go against nature, even if you were to publish the laws, it would be of no use.

20.13 (in part)

The sage

> covers like Heaven, upholds like Earth,
> illuminates like the sun and moon,
> harmonizes like yin and yang,
> transforms like the four seasons,
> [treats] the myriad things all differently,
> is without precedent or novelty,
> is without stranger or kin.

Thus [the sage] takes Heaven as his model.
Heaven does not have [only] a single season;
Earth does not have [only] a single benefit;
humankind does not have [only] a single affair.
Therefore,
various undertakings cannot but have multiple origins;
hurried steps cannot but take different directions.
The Five Phases are of different *qi,* but all are harmonious.
The Six Arts are of different categories, but all are connected.
Warmth and kindness, gentleness and goodness, are the influences of the *Odes*;
purity and grandeur, nobility and generosity, are the teachings of the *Documents*;
clarity and brilliance, perception and penetration, are the norms of the *Changes*;
deference and self-control, respect and humility, are the behaviors of the *Rites*;
broad-mindedness and magnanimity, simplicity and easiness, are the transforming [qualities] of the *Music*;
reprimands and critiques, blame and appraisal, are the polishing cloths of the *Spring and Autumn* [*Annals*].
Thus [if relied on exclusively],
the shortcoming of the *Changes* is superstition;
the shortcoming of the *Music* is lewdness;
the shortcoming of the *Odes* is foolishness;
the shortcoming of the *Documents* is rigidity,
the shortcoming of the *Rites* is stubbornness, and
the shortcoming of the *Spring and Autumn* is censoriousness.
The sage uses [all] six in conjunction and both prizes and institutes them.

20.18

In governing the self,
it is best to nurture the spirit.
The next best is to nurture the body.
In governing the state,
it is best to nurture transformation.
The next best is to correct the laws.

A clear spirit and a balanced will,
the hundred joints all in good order,
constitute the root of nurturing vitality.
To fatten the muscles and skin,
to fill the bowel and belly,
to satiate the lusts and desires,
constitute the branches of nurturing vitality.
If the people
yield to one another and compete to dwell humbly;
delegate benefit and compete to receive scantily,
work at tasks and compete to follow arduously,
daily transformed by their superiors and moved to goodness without realizing the means by which they came to be so, this is the root of government.
With beneficial rewards to encourage goodness
and fearful punishments to prevent misdeeds,
laws and ordinances corrected above
and the common people submitting below:
these are the branches of government.

Earlier generations nurtured the root, but later generations served the branches. This is why Great Peace does not arise. Now a ruler who desires to govern well does not appear in every age, and a minister who can accompany a ruler in initiating good government does not appear once in ten thousand [officials]. To rely on a minister who does not appear once in ten thousand to seek out a ruler who does not appear in every age is the reason why they do not meet once in ten thousand years!

20.19

The nature of water
is to be saturating and clear.
In valleys where it is stagnant
and gives birth to green algae,
[that results from] not controlling it [according to] its nature. If you make channels where it flows and deepen the flow or build up where it [threatens to] flood through and raise [its level], you will enable it to move in compliance with its natural propensity, moving along and flowing onward. Though carrion and rotten bones flow and mix with the water, they cannot

pollute it. The nature [of water] is not different; it is just a matter of whether it can flow through [a channel] or not flow through.

Customs and habits are like this. If [the ruler's] sincerity

floods through to goodness of will,
builds embankments against depravity of heart,
opens up the road to goodness
and blocks the path to wickedness,

then likewise [sincerity] emerges into a single Way, [so that] the people's nature can become good and customs and habits can be beautified.

20.23

In ancient times,

laws were established, but they were not violated;
punishments were elaborated, but they were not used.

It is not the case that they could punish but did not punish.

The hundred kinds of artisans adhered to the seasons, and their many achievements were, without exception, brilliant. Propriety and Rightness were cultivated, and the worthy and the virtuous were employed. Thus they promoted

the loftiest in the world to become the Three Dukes,
the loftiest in the state to become the Nine Ministers,
the loftiest in the counties to become the twenty-seven grandees,
and the loftiest in the prefectures to become the eighty-one functionaries.
Those whose knowledge surpassed ten thousand men were called "talented";
those whose knowledge surpassed a thousand men were called "eminent";
those whose knowledge surpassed a hundred men were called "brave";
those whose knowledge surpassed ten men were called "prominent."

Those who

understood the Way of Heaven,
investigated the patterns of Earth,
penetrated human feelings,
whose greatness sufficed to accommodate the multitudes,
whose Moral Potency sufficed to embrace the distant,
whose trustworthiness sufficed to unify heterogeneity,

and whose knowledge sufficed to understand alteration
were the “talented” among men.

Those whose
Moral Potency sufficed to transform [the people] through education,
conduct sufficed to accord with Rightness,
Humaneness sufficed to win the multitudes,
and brilliance sufficed to illuminate those below
were the “eminent” among men.

Those whose
conduct sufficed to be ceremonious and exemplary,
knowledge sufficed to resolve deceptive resemblances,
honesty enabled them to distribute resources,
trustworthiness enabled them to inspire [others] to honor their commitments,
accomplished deeds could be emulated,
and spoken words could be used for guidance
were the “brave “ among men.

Those who
held to their duties and did not abandon them,
dwelled in Rightness and were not partisan,
encountered hardships and did not illicitly avoid them,
and perceived advantages and did not illicitly gain from them
were the “prominent” among men.

The “talented,” “eminent,” “brave,” and “prominent” each in accordance with their degree of ability occupied their official position and attained what was appropriate to each.

From the root flowing to the branches, using the heavy to control the light,
when the ruler called, the people harmonized;
when the ruler moved, the lowly followed.
Within the Four Seas, all submitted with a single mind, turning their backs on greed and avarice and turning toward Humaneness and Rightness. In transforming the people, they resembled the wind stirring the grasses and trees, leaving nothing unaffected.

20.28

Those who have the ability to accomplish the work of hegemon or king are invariably those who gain victory;
those who have the ability to gain victory are invariably those who are powerful;
those who have the ability to be powerful are invariably those who employ the people's strength;
those who have the ability to employ the people's strength are invariably those who gain the people's hearts;
those who have the ability to gain the people's hearts are invariably those who gain mastery over the self.

Thus,

the heart is the root of the self;
the self is the root of the state.
There has never been a person who gained "the self" and lost the people;
there has never been a person who lost "the self" and gained the people.

Thus, to establish the basis of order, you must exert yourself to secure the people.

The root of securing the people lies in sufficiency of use;
the root of sufficiency of use lies in not taking them from their seasonal [work];
the root of not taking them from their seasonal [work] lies in reducing endeavors;
the root of reducing endeavors lies in regulating desires;
the root of regulating desires lies in reverting back to nature.
It has never been possible
to agitate the root yet calm the branches;
to pollute the source yet purify the flow.
Thus,
those who know the essential qualities of nature do not endeavor to make nature do what it cannot do.
Those who know the essential qualities of fate are not anxious about what fate cannot control.

Thus,

those who do not [erect] lofty palaces and terraces do not do so because they cherish trees;

those who do not [cast] massive bells and tripods do not do so because they cherish metal.

They straightforwardly put into practice the essential qualities of nature and fate so that their regulations and measures can be taken to constitute a standard for the myriad people.

Now when

the eyes delight in the five colors,
the mouth relishes enticing flavors,
the ears are enraptured by the five sounds,

the seven orifices struggle with one another and harm [your] nature, daily attracting wicked desires and disturbing its heavenly harmony. If you cannot govern "the self," how can you govern the world? Thus if in nurturing the self you achieve regulation, then in nurturing the people you will win their hearts.

The expression "taking possession of the world" does not refer to holding power and position, accepting hereditary rank, or being referred to by a respectful title. It means

linking up with the strength of the world
and winning the hearts of the world.

The territory of [the tyrant] Djou to the left reached the Eastern Sea and to the right reached to the Sea of Sands. Before him lay Jiaozhi and behind him lay Youdu.[2] His armies climbed Rong Pass and reached the Pu River. Their warriors numbered in the tens and hundreds of thousands, but they all shot their arrows backward and fought with their halberds turned [toward the tyrant]. King Wu of Zhou with his left hand held a yellow battle-ax and with his right grasped a white banner to direct his armies, and the enemy were shattered like broken tiles and fled, collapsing like a pile of earth.

[The tyrant] Djou had the title of "the one who faces south" [i.e., the ruler] but lacked the praise of even a single man. This is how he lost the world. Thus Jie and Djou cannot be considered [to have been true] kings, and [Kings] Tang and Wu cannot be considered to have banished them.

The Zhou people dwelled in the lands of Feng and Hao. Their territory did not exceed a hundred *li,* yet they swore an oath against [the tyrant] Djou at Mulberry Field and attacked and occupied the Yin state. They

held a memorial service at the ancestral temple of Tang the Victorious,
conferred a plaque at the gates of the village where Shang Rong lived,
built up the tomb of Bi Gan,

and released the imprisoned Jizi.

Only then did they

snap the drumsticks and destroy the drums of war,
retire the five kinds of weapons,
release the oxen and the horses,
gather up the jade insignia tablets,
and accept the fealty of the world.

The people [lit. the “hundred surnames”] sang ballads to celebrate them while the Lords of the Land, grasping gifts of exotic birds, came calling at their court, for the hearts of the people had been won.

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1. “Rural libations” refers to a kind of village festival during which participants drank in order of seniority.
2. This description reflects the orientation of Chinese maps, with south at the top of the page. The places named correspond approximately to the Yellow Sea, the Gobi Desert, Vietnam, and the Inner Asian frontier grasslands.

Twenty-One

AN OVERVIEW OF THE ESSENTIALS

"Yao lue," or "An Overview of the Essentials," stands somewhat apart from the twenty chapters of the *Huainanzi* that precede it. Although "Yao lue" appears at the end of the work (following the established convention of Chinese works of the late Warring States and early Han periods), it serves as, and apparently was written as, an introduction to the entire work. It explains why the book was written, orients readers to its contents, and makes claims for its value and universal validity. We believe that the chapter was originally written by Liu An himself for oral recitation at the imperial court as an introduction to and description of the *Huainanzi* when the entire text was formally presented to Emperor Wu in 139 B.C.E., shortly after he ascended the throne. Having been recited at court, the "overview" would then have been appended in written form to the twenty substantive chapters of the *Huainanzi*, serving as a postscript to review and summarize its contents.

The chapter consists of four complementary sections. The first introduces the work as a whole and provides a list of the twenty chapter titles that, strikingly, form a rhymed set. The second gives a thoughtful and illuminating summary of each chapter in turn. (We have quoted these summaries in our introductions to each of the chapters.) The next section links the twenty chapters together in a grand design, showing that each chapter builds on those that precede it. The final section argues for the cogency and significance of the work as a whole by placing it in a comparative and historical framework.

The form of this chapter is distinctive and of great interest. It is a *fu* (poetic expression), a type of verse very popular in Han China, and of which Liu An was an acknowledged master. (Another example of the genre in the *Huainanzi* is section 8.9.) As we see in this chapter, works in the *fu* genre tend to be quite long, and to make intricate use of rhyme, shifting meter, and ornate, baroque vocabulary. Apparently, *fu* were usually composed in writing (again as seems to be the case here) for oral recitation.

Both the written text and the oral recitation were expected to be virtuoso performances, in which the literary quality of the work increased both its prestige and its persuasiveness. It is inspiring to think of Liu An (or a professional performer reciting on his behalf) intoning this dazzling poetic composition as a way of launching the *Huainanzi* on its long career as a major work of Chinese philosophy.

Twenty-One

21.1 (in part)

We have created and composed these writings and discourses as a means to

knot the net of the Way and its Potency
and weave the web of humankind and its affairs,
above investigating them in Heaven,
below examining them on Earth,
and in the middle comprehending them through patterns.

Although they are not yet able to draw out fully the core of the Profound Mystery, they are abundantly sufficient to observe its ends and beginnings. If we [only] summarized the essentials or provided an overview and our words did not discriminate the Pure, Uncarved Block and differentiate the Great Ancestor, then it would cause people in their confusion to fail to understand them.

Thus,

numerous are the words we have composed
and extensive are the illustrations we have provided,

yet we still fear that people will depart from the root and follow the branches.

Thus,
if we speak of the Way but do not speak of affairs,
there would be no means to shift with the times.

[Conversely],
if we speak of affairs but do not speak of the Way,
there would be no means to move with [the processes of] transformation.
Therefore we composed [the book's] twenty essays. . . .

21.3

In all, these interconnected writings are the means to focus on the Way and remove obstructions, enabling succeeding generations to know what is appropriate to uphold or abandon and what is suitable to endorse or reject.

Externally, when they interact with things, they will not be bewildered;

internally, they will possess the means to lodge their spirit and nourish their *qi*.

They will take ease in and merge with utmost harmony, delighting themselves in what they have received from Heaven and Earth.

Therefore,

Had we discussed the Way [“Originating in the Way”] and not illuminated ends and beginnings [“Activating the Genuine”],
you would not know the models to follow.

Had we discussed ends and beginnings and not illuminated Heaven,
Earth, and the four seasons [“Celestial Patterns,” “Terrestrial Forms,” and “Seasonal Rules,” respectively],
you would not know the taboos to avoid.

Had we discussed Heaven, Earth, and the four seasons and not introduced examples and elucidated categories,
you would not recognize the subtleties of the quintessential *qi* [“Surveying Obscurities”].

Had we discussed the Utmost Essence and not traced to its source the spiritlike *qi* of human beings,
you would not know the mechanism by which to nourish your vitality [“Quintessential Spirit”].

Had we traced to their source the genuine dispositions of human beings and not discussed the Potency of the great sages,
you would not know the [human] shortcomings associated with the Five Phases [“The Basic Warp”].

Had we discussed the Way of the [Five] Thearchs and not discussed the affairs of the ruler,
you would not know the proper order distinguishing the small from the great [“The Ruler’s Techniques”].

Had we discussed the affairs of the ruler and not provided precepts and illustrations,
you would not know the times for taking action or remaining still [“Profound Precepts”].

Had we discussed precepts and illustrations and not discussed alterations in customs,
you would not know how to coordinate and equate their main tenets. [“Integrating Customs”].

Had we discussed alterations in customs and not discussed past events,

you would not know the responses of the Way and its Potency ["Responses of the Way"].
To know the Way and its Potency but not know the perversions of the age,
you would lack the means to accommodate yourself to the myriad aspects of the world ["Boundless Discourses"].
To know "Boundless Discourses" but not know "Sayings Explained,"
you would lack the means to take your ease.
To comprehend writings and compositions but not know the tenets of military affairs,
you would lack the means to respond to [enemy] troops ["An Overview of the Military"].
To know grand overviews but not know analogies and illustrations,
you would lack the means to clarify affairs by elaboration ["A Mountain of Persuasions" and "A Forest of Persuasions"].
To know the Public Way but not know interpersonal relations,
you would lack the means to respond to ill and good fortune ["Among Others"].
To know interpersonal relations but not know "Cultivating Effort,"
you would lack the means to inspire scholars to exert their utmost strength.

Should you desire
to forcibly abridge this composition
by observing and summarizing only its essentials
without traveling its winding paths and entering its subtle domains, this will not suffice to exhaust the meanings of the Way and its Potency.

Therefore, we composed [these] writings in twenty chapters. Thereby
the patterns of Heaven and Earth are thoroughly examined;
the affairs of the human realm are comprehensively engaged;
and the Way of [the Five] Thearchs and [Three] Kings is fully described.

Their discussions are
sometimes detailed and sometimes general,
sometimes subtle and sometimes obvious.
The tenets advanced in each chapter are different,
and each has a reason for being expressed.

Now, if we spoke exclusively of the Way, there would be nothing that is not contained in it. Nevertheless, only sages are capable of grasping its root and thereby knowing its branches. At this time, scholars lack the capabilities of sages, and if we do not provide them with detailed explanations,

then to the end of their days they will flounder in the midst of darkness and obscurity

without knowing the great awakening brought about by these writings' luminous and brilliant techniques.

Now, the "Qian" and "Kun" [trigrams] of the *Changes* suffice to comprehend the Way and disclose its meanings. With the eight trigrams you can understand the inauspicious and auspicious and know bad and good fortune. Nevertheless, Fu Xi made them into the sixty-four permutations [i.e., hexagrams], and the house of Zhou added six line-texts to each of the hexagrams, and these are the means to

trace to the source and fathom the Way of Purity and Clarity

and grasp and follow the Ancestor of the myriad things.

The number of the five notes does not exceed *gong*, *shang*, *jue*, *zhi*, and *yu*. Nevertheless, you cannot play them all on the [unstopped] five strings of a *qin*. You must control and harmonize the fine and thick strings, and only then can you produce a melody.

Now, if you draw only the head of a dragon, those observing it will not be able to identify what animal it is. But if you add the body, there will be no confusion as to the animal's identity.

Now,

if our references to the "Way" were numerous,

[but] if our references to "things" were few;

if our references to "techniques" were extensive,

[but] if our references to "affairs" were superficial,

and we extended this [throughout] our discussions,

we would be left speechless.

Anyone who intended to study this

and who firmly wished to build on it, would [also] find himself with nothing to say.

Now,

discussions about the Way are surpassingly profound;

therefore, we have written many compositions on it [i.e., the Way] to reveal its true qualities.

The myriad things are surpassingly numerous;
therefore we have broadly offered explanations of them to communicate their significance.

Though these compositions may be
winding and endless,
complicated and slow going,
intertwined and numerous,
and distant and dawdling,
in order to distill and purify their utmost meaning and ensure that they are neither opaque nor impenetrable, we have retained them and not discarded them.

Now, although the debris and putrid carcasses floating in the Yangzi and Yellow rivers cannot be surpassed in number, nevertheless those who offer sacrifices draw water from them. [This is because] the rivers are so large.

Although a cup of wine may be sweet, if a fly is immersed in it, even commoners will not drink it. [This is because] the cup is so small.

If you sincerely comprehend the discussions in these twenty chapters, you will thereby
observe their general patterns and grasp their essentials,
penetrate the Nine Fields,
pass through the Ten Gates,
externalize Heaven and Earth,
and extend beyond the mountains and rivers.
Wandering and ambling through the span of a single age,
governing and fashioning the forms of the Myriad Things,
surely this is an excellent journey! This being the case,
you will clasp the sun and the moon without being burned,
and you will anoint the myriad things without drying up.

How ample! How lucid!
It is enough to read this [alone]!
How far-reaching and vast! How boundless!
Here you may wander!

21.4 (in part)

In this book of the Liu clan [i.e., the *Huainanzi*], [we have]
observed the phenomena of Heaven and Earth,

penetrated past and present discussions,
weighed affairs and established regulations,
measured forms and applied what is suitable,
traced to its source the heart of the Way and its Potency,
and united the customs of the Three Kings,
collecting them and alloying them.
At the core of the Profound Mystery,
the infinitesimal movements of the essence have been revealed.
By casting aside limits and boundaries
and by drawing on the pure and the tranquil,
[We have] thereby
unified the world,
brought order to the myriad things,
responded to alterations and transformations,
and comprehended their distinctions and categories.
We have not
followed a path made by a solitary footprint
or adhered to instructions from a single perspective
or allowed ourselves to be entrapped or fettered by things so that we would not advance or shift according to the age.
Thus,
situate [this book] in the narrowest of circumstances and nothing will obstruct it;
extend it to the whole world and it will leave no empty spaces.

GLOSSARY OF PERSONAL NAMES

This glossary contains the names of all personages found in the excerpted text, whether mythical, legendary, or historical, with the exception of names such as Grand Purity, Inexhaustible, and Wheelwright Flat that are clearly fanciful. Names are alphabetized by Chinese name. For example, Duke Huan of Qi is found under Huan (Duke Huan of Qi), and Music Master Kuang is found under Kuang (Music Master Kuang).

BAILI XI was the prime minister of Qin in the time of Duke Mu (ca. 660–621 B.C.E.). He was captured by Jin forces in Yu and escaped to Chu. Duke Mu told the ruler of Chu that Baili Xi had abandoned his office and offered five sheepskins for his return for prosecution. He thus secured the return of his valuable minister for a trifling amount.

BEIGONGZI (also known as Beigong You) was a famous swordsman of Qi, regarded as a paragon of courage.

BI GAN (eleventh century B.C.E.) was an upright uncle of Tyrant Djou, last king of the Shang dynasty. King Djou supposedly had his heart torn out to see if the heart of a famous worthy was any different from that of an ordinary person.

BIAN HE attempted to present a piece of raw jade to successive kings of Chu. Twice he was accused of fraud and severely punished but ultimately was vindicated.

BIAN QUE (fifth century B.C.E.) was a famous physician.

BO (Duke of Bo, Duke Sheng of Bo [d. 479 B.C.E.]) was a grandson of King Ping of Chu (r. 528–516 B.C.E.). His father was executed by the ruler of Zheng, and the Duke of Bo urged the prime minister of Chu to attack Zheng. Instead, Chu formed an alliance with Zheng and sent an army to help Zheng repel an invasion by Jin. The Duke of Bo rebelled and killed the Chu prime minister but was himself trapped in a bathhouse and killed.

BO YA was a master musician who famously broke his instrument when Zhongzi Qi, the person who most appreciated his music, died.

BO YU, supposedly a minister of the (mythical) Yellow Emperor, is identified as the inventor of clothing.

BOCHENG ZIGAO, a (mythical) Lord of the Land in predynastic times, was appointed by Yao but resigned his rank on the appointment of Shun to be Son of Heaven, complaining that government had become too burdensome and complex.

CHANG HONG (d. 492 B.C.E.) was an official of the state of Lu, famed for his skill in astronomy, calendrical computations, and divination.

CHENG (King Cheng of Zhou [r. 1043–1021 B.C.E.]) was the third king of the Zhou dynasty. The Duke of Zhou served as his regent until he reached his majority.

CHENG TANG. *See* Tang (King Tang or Tang the Victorious).

CHONG' ER. *See* Wen (Duke Wen of Jin).

CONFUCIUS (Kongzi [Master Kong] or Kong Qiu [551–479 B.C.E.]) is regarded as China's first philosopher and is especially revered as a great teacher.

DA BING and **QIAN QUE** were mythical charioteers of the astral god known as the Grand One (Taiyi).

DAN, DUKE. *See* Zhou Gong (Duke of Zhou).

DIVINE FARMER. *See* Shen Nong.

DJOU (Tyrant Djou [r. ?–1046 B.C.E.]), a semi-legendary last king of the Shang dynasty, was known for his extravagance and cruelty.

FU YUE was a (possibly legendary) minister during the Shang dynasty (ca. 1550–1046 B.C.E.). He is said to have ascended to Heaven by riding on certain constellations.

FUCHAI (King Fuchai of Wu [r. 495–477 B.C.E.]) defeated King Goujian of Yue and took him prisoner. He was subsequently defeated, and his state was extinguished, by the resurgent King Goujian with the help of the beautiful concubines Mao Qiang and Xi Shi, who had been sent from Yue to seduce and distract him.

FUXI (Tamer of Beasts) was a mythical culture-hero of predynastic times, credited with domesticating animals and creating the trigrams and hexagrams of the *Changes*. He is associated with his sister-spouse Nüwa, with early images of the pair often depicting them with entwined serpentine bodies.

GAN JIANG was a legendary swordsmith of superlative skill and the husband of the equally renowned swordsmith Mo Ye.

GAOYANG TUI was a grandee of Song, about whom nothing else is known.

GONG GONG was a mythical figure supposed to have lived during the predynastic era of sage-rulers. His name could be translated as "Master Artisan." He fought a titanic battle with Zhuan Xu, during which one of the pillars of Heaven was so damaged that the land tilted upward in the northwest.

GONGNIU AI was what might colloquially be termed a "weretiger." According to one commentator, the ability to transform into a tiger was a hereditary trait of the Gongniu clan.

GONGSHU (also known as Gongshu Ban or Lu Ban [ca. fifth century B.C.E.]) was a legendary artisan of supreme skill. He is said to have invented a "Cloud-Scaling Ladder" with which the king of Chu planned to attack the walled capital of the state of Song, until Mozi persuaded him that his own disciples, who were defending Song, could defeat this technology.

GOU MANG was a mythical being or deity associated with the planet Jupiter.

GOUJIAN (King Goujian of Yue [r. 496–465 B.C.E.]) was defeated by King Fuchai of Wu and endured the humiliation of becoming his servant, but he later led a Yue army to defeat King Fuchai and extinguish his state.

GRAND ONE (Taiyi*)* was an astral deity who embodied the unity of the Way.

GRAY WOMAN was a mythical goddess or fairy associated with winter.

GUAN ZHONG was one of the most celebrated statesmen of the Spring and Autumn period. He served as prime minister under Duke Huan of Qi (r. 685–643 B.C.E.). The text known as the *Guanzi* bears his name but was written or compiled several centuries after his lifetime.

GUN was the (mythical) father of Yu the Great. He tried but failed to control the Great Flood and was therefore punished by the sage-ruler Shun.

HAN FEI (d. 233 B.C.E.) was a statecraft theorist during the late Warring States period. The text that bears his name, the *Hanfeizi*, was an important source for the *Huainanzi*.

HOU JI (Lord Millet) was a mythical sage-king of the predynastic era and divine ancestor of the ruling clan of the Zhou dynasty.

HOU TU (Sovereign of the Soil) was a mythical ruler during China's predynastic period.

HUAN (Duke Huan of Qi [r. 685–643 B.C.E.]) was one of the most powerful rulers of the Spring and Autumn period. He was the first to hold the post of hegemon and employed the famous statesman Guan Zhong as his prime minister.

HUAN DOU, a mythical figure who supposedly was a minister under the sage-ruler Yao, was exiled for opposing the accession of Shun to the throne.

HUANG DI, the Yellow Emperor, was a mythical sage-ruler of ancient China, associated with the central regions and the planet Saturn. He was credited with inventing the calendar, metallurgy, and other cultural phenomena.

HUI (King Hui of Qin [r. 337–311 B.C.E.]) was an aggressive ruler who expanded the power of Qin during his tenure as monarch. After taking the throne, he executed the reformer Shang Yang but continued his progressive policies.

HUI (King Hui of Wei, also known as King Hui of Liang [r. 369–319 B.C.E.]) was the first ruler of Wei to assume the title of king. He moved the capital of Wei to Da Liang and oversaw the building

of several large-scale public works. At the end of his long reign, after suffering successive defeats by powerful neighbors, he initiated a campaign to attract scholars and drew figures like Mencius to his court.

HUI SHI. *See* Huizi.

HUIZI (Master Hui or Hui Shi [fourth century B.C.E.]) was a sophist who served as chief minister of King Hui of Liang (also known as King Hui of Wei). He is often depicted as having engaged in debates with Zhuangzi.

JI ZI (or Jizi) was a (possibly legendary) loyal official of the Shang dynasty. He was condemned to death by the tyrannical King Djou but escaped execution by feigning madness.

JIAN (Viscount Jian of Zhao, also known as Zhao Yang [d. 475 B.C.E.]), a ministerial vassal of Jin, was the successful leader of the Zhao clan in factional struggles against rival vassal clans. He was a proponent of government reform known for casting the penal laws of Jin onto bronze tripods for public display.

JIE (Tyrant Jie [ca. 1550 B.C.E.]), the semi-legendary last king of the Xia dynasty, was known for his cruelty and profligacy. He was overthrown by Tang the Victorious, founding king of the Shang dynasty.

JIE FAN was supposedly a strongman of the late Warring States period, about whom nothing else is known.

JING (Emperor Jing of the Han Dynasty, personal name Liu Qi [r. 157–141 B.C.E.]) was the fourth emperor of the Han dynasty. He was a grandson of the founding emperor, Liu Bang (Emperor Gao), and son of Emperor Wen. He and Liu An, the sponsor-editor of the *Huainanzi*, were cousins, and much of the book seems to have been written during Jing's reign.

JING (Duke Jing of Qi [r. 547–490 B.C.E.]) was placed on the throne by the rebel Cui Zhu. He was reputed to be a harsh and licentious ruler but to have improved somewhat under the edifying influence of Yan Ying.

JINGGUO (Lord Jingguo, also known as Tian Ying) was a scion of the Tian clan who became prime minister of Qi in 311 B.C.E. His son attained fame as Lord Mengchang. His fief of Xue is located in present-day Shandong Province.

KANG (King Kang of Zhou [r. ca. 1021–996 B.C.E.]) was the fourth king of the Zhou dynasty.

KUANG (Music Master Kuang), a semi-legendary figure said to have been Master of Music for the state of Jin during the Spring and Autumn period, was regarded as the greatest authority on music in ancient China. He is mentioned frequently in early texts.

KONGZI or **KONG QIU**. *See* Confucius.

LAO DAN (sixth century B.C.E.), a possibly legendary figure, has traditionally been identified with Laozi, the "Old Master," the supposed author of the work known as the *Laozi* or the *Daodejing*.

LI JI, Lady (seventh century B.C.E.) was a woman of a northern "barbarian" Rong tribe who became the favorite concubine of Duke Xian of Jin. His infatuation with her led to a train of disastrous events.

LI KE (also known as Li Kui [ca. 455–395 B.C.E.]) was a statesman and government reformer who served as the prime minister of Wei under Marquis Wen. He is credited with inventing certain techniques of rule, such as using the sale and purchase of state grain reserves to stabilize prices.

LI QI was a famous musician in the state of Zhao.

LI ZHU was supposedly a minister to the mythical sage-king Huangdi, the Yellow Emperor.

LIU AN (179–122 B.C.E.) was the patron, editor, and probable coauthor of the *Huainanzi*. He became king of Huainan in 164 B.C.E., succeeding his father after an interval of some years during which the kingdom was greatly reduced in size. He presided over a highly literary court that became a magnet for writers and intellectuals. Accused of plotting rebellion against the Han imperial throne, he committed suicide in 122 B.C.E.

LIU BANG (r. 206–195 B.C.E.) was the founding emperor of the Han dynasty, posthumously known as Emperor Gao.

LIU CHANG (199?–174 B.C.E.) was the father of Liu An, patron of the *Huainanzi*. A son of the Han founder, Liu Bang, he was enthroned as king of Huainan while still an infant but later was accused of rebellion and died on the road to exile.

LIU CHE. *See* Wu (Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty).

LIU QI. *See* Jing (Emperor Jing of the Han dynasty).

LORD MILLET. *See* Hou Ji.

LU BAN. *See* Gongshu Ban.

LÜ BUWEI (d. 235 B.C.E.) was a prime minister of Qin during the late Warring States period. He assembled a group of scholars as his clients and, with their assistance, produced a large and highly syncretic text, the *Lüshi chunqiu*, that served as both a model and an important source for the *Huainanzi*.

LÜ WANG. *See* Wang (Grand Duke Wang).

MAO QIANG and **XI SHI** were famous beauties from the state of Yue, credited with helping engineer the destruction of the state of Wu by so distracting King Fuchai (r. 495–477 B.C.E.) that he neglected his royal duties. Their names became emblematic of perfect feminine beauty.

MENCIUS (Mengzi [Master Meng], personal name Meng Ke [ca. 390–305 B.C.E.]) was a philosopher and teacher, the leading Confucian disciple of his era. The *Huainanzi* draws to some extent on the text that bears his name.

MENG BEN was a semi-legendary fearless hero of the Warring States period, known for his acute vision.

MIZI (also known as Mi Buqi and Zijian [b. 521 B.C.E.]) was a disciple of Confucius.

MO DI. *See* Mozi.

MO YE was the wife of the legendary swordsmith Gan Jiang and herself a superlative smith. The legendary sword "Moye" is named for her.

MOZI (Master Mo, personal name Mo Di [fl. fifth century B.C.E.]) was a rival of Confucius who advocated "universal love" and opposed offensive warfare. In the *Huainanzi*, Mozi and Confucius are often paired as exemplary philosophers.

MU (Duke Mu of Qin [r. ca. 650–621 B.C.E.]) was a notably effective ruler during the Spring and Autumn period.

MUSIC MASTER KUANG. *See* Kuang (Music Master Kuang).

NING QI, a native of Wei during the Spring and Autumn period, began life in poverty and ultimately rose to succeed Guan Zhong as the prime minister of Qi. He first attracted the attention of Duke Huan with his mournful singing.

PING (Duke Ping of Jin) ruled from 557 to 532 B.C.E.

QI was the son of Yu the Great, the mythical tamer of the Great Flood and legendary founder of the Xia dynasty. When he inherited the throne from his father, the principle of hereditary dynastic succession was established.

QIAN QUE and **DA BING** were mythical charioteers of the astral god known as the Grand One (Taiyi).

QIN SHIHUANGDI (First Emperor of Qin [259–210 B.C.E.]) became king of Qin in 246 B.C.E. In a series of campaigns, Qin then defeated and absorbed all the other states of the Warring States period by 221, uniting China as a single empire for the first time. When he died in 210, his dynasty quickly collapsed and was succeeded by the Han dynasty in 206 B.C.E.

QINGXIANG (King Qingxiang of Chu) ruled from 299 to 263 B.C.E.

QU JIAN was a grandee of Chu.

QUEEN MOTHER OF THE WEST (Xiwangmu) was a goddess who ruled over a paradise on Mount Kunlun, somewhere to the northwest of China. She was believed to know the recipe for an elixir of immortality.

RU SHOU was a mythical being or deity associated with the planet Venus.

SHANG RONG was a (possibly legendary) Shang dynasty worthy who was put to death by Tyrant Djou for his honest admonitions against the king's abuses.

SHAO HAO was a mythical being or deity associated with the planet Venus.

SHE (Duke of She, also known as Shen Zhuliang [fifth century B.C.E.]) was a grandee and vassal of Chu who led the forces that put down the rebellion of the Duke of Bo.

SHEN NONG (Divine Farmer) was a mythical culture-hero of predynastic times, credited with inventing agriculture.

SHENG (Duke Sheng of Bo). *See* Bo (Duke of Bo).

SHI QI (d. 479 B.C.E.) was a minister and diplomat in the service of Duke Sheng of Bo. He assisted the duke in his rebellion against the Chu throne. When the rebellion was put down, he was boiled alive as punishment.

SHU HAI was supposedly an official in the service of the semi-mythical ruler Yu the Great, the mythical tamer of the Great Flood and legendary founder of the Xia dynasty.

SHUN (also known as Youyu or Yu [written with a character different from that for the name of Yu the Great]) was a mythical sage-king of the predynastic era. He was given the throne by his predecessor, Yao, and similarly passed over his unworthy son and bequeathed the throne instead to Yu the Great, the mythical tamer of the Great Flood and legendary founder of the Xia dynasty.

SHUXIANG was the nickname of Yangshe Xi, a grand officer of the state of Jin during the Spring and Autumn period who was known for his worthiness and ability.

SICHENG ZIHAN. *See* Zihan.

SIMA KUAIKUI was a knight of Zhao during the Warring States period, famed for his skill with a sword.

SOVEREIGN OF THE SOIL. *See* Hou Tu.

SUNZI (Master Sun, personal name Sun Wu [fl. sixth century B.C.E.]) was a famous general who, according to legend, led the armies of Wu to a great victory over Chu in the sixth century B.C.E. A later text that bears his name, the *Sunzi bingfa* (*Master Sun's Arts of War*), is an important source for the military teachings of the *Huainanzi*.

SUPREME THEARCH (Shang di) was the chief deity and celestial ruler of ancient Chinese religion, dating back to at least the Shang dynasty (ca. 1550–1046 B.C.E.).

TAI HAO was a mythical being or deity associated with the planet Jupiter.

TAI ZHANG was supposedly an official in the service of the semi-mythical ruler Yu the Great, the mythical tamer of the Great Flood and legendary founder of the Xia dynasty.

TAIYI. *See* Grand One.

TANG (King Tang or Cheng Tang [Tang the Victorious] [ca. 1550 B.C.E.]) was the semi-legendary founder of the Shang dynasty.

TANG (Master Tang, also known as Music Master Tang) is said to have instructed Confucius in the art of playing the *qin*.

TANG GULIANG was a minister of Qin in the time of King Hui (r. 337–311 B.C.E.).

TRANQUIL WOMAN was a deity associated with maintaining the harmonious progression of the seasons.

VERMILION THEARCH (Chi di) was a mythical ruler of high antiquity, sometimes equated with Yan di, the Flame Emperor.

WANG (Grand Duke Wang, also known as Lü Wang [eleventh century B.C.E.]) was a commoner who sold meat by the roadside before he came to the attention of King Wu of the Zhou. After being promoted, he became the Zhou military commander at the battle of Muye, when the Zhou dynasty achieved its final victory over the Shang. His descendants, the Ji clan, later ruled the state of Qi until they were overthrown by the Tian clan in 379 B.C.E.

WANG LIANG was a grandee of the state of Jin during the Spring and Autumn Period, known for his skill as a charioteer.

WEI (King Wei of Chu) reigned from 339 to 329 B.C.E.

WEN (Duke Wen of Jin, also known as Chong'er [r. 636–628 B.C.E.]) was a storied ruler who, despite having a crippling physical deformity and being forced to live in exile in early life, rose to become one of the most powerful leaders of the state of Jin and the second Zhou vassal lord to assume the title of hegemon. He figures in many early texts.

WEN (King Wen of Chu [r. 689–677 B.C.E.]) is credited with having established the state of Chu as a major power during the Spring and Autumn period.

WEN (King Wen of Zhou [r. ca. 1099–1049 B.C.E.]) was the founder of the Zhou dynasty.

WEN WUWEI (also known as Shen Zhou), a Chu vassal in the time of King Zhuang, was sent on a diplomatic mission to Qi without asking the ruler of Song for free passage through his territory and consequently was killed en route.

WU (Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty, personal name Liu Che [r. 141–87 B.C.E.]) was the son of Emperor Jing. He became emperor at the age of about fifteen and had a long and brilliant reign. He was a first cousin once removed from Liu An, king of Huainan, who presented the *Huainanzi* to him at a court audience in 139 B.C.E.

WU (King Wu of Zhou [r. ca. 1049–1043 B.C.E.]) completed the conquest of the Shang dynasty begun by his father, King Wen of Zhou, by defeating the Shang army in the battle of Muye in 1046 B.C.E.

WU (Marquis Wu of Wei [r. 396–371 B.C.E.]), the second ruler of the independent state of Wei, expanded his state's territories through a series of aggressive campaigns.

WU HUO was a legendary strongman who served King Wu of Qin (r. 310–307 B.C.E.).

WU QI (d. 381 B.C.E.) was a famous statesman and soldier of the Warring States period. He led armies for Lu and Wei and eventually was employed as prime minister by King Dao of Chu. He led Chu effectively until the king's death, when the aristocratic clans of Chu murdered him out of resentment. The *Wuzi*, a text on military strategy, is attributed to him.

WULING (King Wuling of Zhao [r. 325–295 B.C.E.]) was a dynamic ruler who initiated political and military reforms. He expanded Zhao's territory but fell victim to factional fighting among his sons and was starved to death in his own palace.

WUMA QI (also known as Wuma Shi [fl. ca. 500 B.C.E.]) was a native of Lu and a disciple of Confucius.

XI FUJI was a minister of Cao during the Spring and Autumn period. He sent a plate of food containing the precious Chuiji jade disk to the ducal scion Chong'er during the latter's wanderings in exile. Chong'er later went on to become Duke Wen of Jin and hegemon.

XI SHI and **MAO QIANG** were famous beauties from the state of Yue, credited with helping engineer the destruction of the state of Wu by so distracting King Fuchai (r. 495–477 B.C.E.) that he neglected his royal duties. Their names became emblematic of perfect feminine beauty.

XI ZHONG was a cartwright of legendary skill.

XIAN (Duke Xian of Jin [r. 676–651 B.C.E.]) gave the Prince of Yu a rare jade disk called the Chuiji Jade in exchange for granting a Jin army the right of passage through Yu territory. The Jin army then treacherously conquered Yu. Later, Duke Xian had his own heir killed in order to replace him with the son he had fathered with the "barbarian" Lady Li Ji, and the struggle for title to the throne lasted for four generations.

XIANG (Viscount Xiang of Zhao [d. 425 B.C.E.]) was the leader of the Zhao clan who orchestrated the alliance that brought down Earl Zhi and led ultimately to the partition of the state of Jin into the three independent kingdoms of Hann, Wei, and Zhao.

XIANG TUO was a precocious youngster who at the age of seven supposedly instructed Confucius.

XIAO JI (Ji the Filial [ca. 1200 B.C.E.]), the son of King Wuding of the Shang dynasty, was renowned for his filial piety. He fell victim to his stepmother's slander and died in exile.

XIEZI (also known as Qi Shezi [fourth century B.C.E.]) was a "persuader."

XING CAN was a mythical rebel in the predynastic era of sage-rulers. When his head was cut off, he continued to fight, using his nipples as eyes and his navel as a mouth, singing and dancing while

brandishing a shield and an ax.

XU YOU was a legendary hermit in the time of the mythical sage-rulers of prehistory.

XUAN MING was a mythical being or deity associated with the north and with the planet Mercury.

XUE (Duke of Xue, also known as Tian Ying and Lord Jingguo) was a scion of the Qi royal house during the Warring States period and the father of Lord Mengchang. He served as prime minister under King Xuan (r. 319–301 B.C.E.).

XUNZI (Master Xun, personal name Xun Kuang [ca. 310–271 B.C.E.]) was his generation's leading disciple of Confucius. The text that bears his name was an important source for the *Huainanzi*.

YAN DI, the Flame Emperor, was a mythical figure associated with the south and the planet Mars and supposed to have been a ruler during the predynastic period of ancient China. He fought, and was defeated by, Huang Di, the Yellow Emperor.

YAN HUI (fl. ca. 500 B.C.E.) was Confucius's favorite disciple. His early death greatly saddened the Master.

YAN YING (also known as Yanzi [d. 500 B.C.E.]) was a celebrated minister who served three successive dukes of Qi with great loyalty and dedication.

YANGSHE XI. *See* Shuxiang.

YAO (also known as Tang [written with a character different from that for the name of Tang the Victorious]) was a mythical sage-king in the predynastic era. Rather than pass down the throne to his unworthy son, he abdicated in favor of the supremely virtuous Shun.

YELLOW EMPEROR. *See* Huang Di.

YI YIN, a legendary minister of King Tang, the founder of the Shang dynasty, was famous for his cooking.

YIN YI (also known as Shi Yi [Scribe Yi]), the grand historian of the Zhou court in the time of King Cheng (r. 1043–1021 B.C.E.), was an astronomer and a diviner of renowned skill.

YOUYU. *See* Shun.

YU (Yu the Great) was the mythical tamer of the Great Flood and legendary founder of the Xia dynasty.

YU FU was a mythical physician, supposed to have lived at the time of the Yellow Emperor.

ZAOFU appears frequently in the *Huainanzi* as the paragon of chariot drivers. He was said to have been the charioteer of King Mu of Zhou (tenth century B.C.E.) on his legendary journey to the West.

ZENG CAN. *See* Zengzi.

ZENGZI (Zeng Can [505–435 B.C.E.]) was a prominent disciple of Confucius, mentioned in many early texts.

ZHAI JIAN (fourth century B.C.E.) was a hereditary minister at the court of Wei during the Warring States period.

ZHANG YI (d. ca. 310 B.C.E.) was a statesman, strategist, and diplomat of the Warring States period. A native of Wei, he traveled as a "roaming persuader" seeking employment at various courts until King Hui made him the prime minister of Qin. Zhang's policies greatly expanded the power of Qin. Contrary to the claim made in *Huainanzi* 9.29, his life did not end in execution.

ZHAO XUANMENG (also known as Zhao Dun and Viscount Xuan of Zhao [fl. late seventh century B.C.E.]) was a minister of Jin. He consolidated control over the Jin court and presided over a period of peace and stability. In 607 B.C.E., he fell out of favor with Duke Ling (r. 620–607) and was forced into exile. The duke had planned an ambush to kill Zhao, but he was saved by a knight named Ling Zhe, to whom Zhao had earlier provided food when he was starving.

ZHI (Earl Zhi, also known as Earl Yao of Zhi [d. 453 B.C.E.]) was a colorful figure who was a master of strategy and deceit. For example, he once gave an enormous bronze bell to the ruler of the northern Qiu You people. In order to transport the bell to their homeland, the Qiu You had to build a road, which Earl Zhi then used to invade and annex their territory. Earl Zhi is also portrayed as an example of overreaching ambition. As leader of the Zhi clan, he seemed poised to

bring all the vassal clans of Jin under his sway, until his arrogant belligerence drove the Hann, Wei, and Zhao clans to unite to destroy him.

ZHI (Robber Zhi) was a legendary bandit of the Warring States period known for his daring, cunning, and ferocity. His name is preserved in the title of chapter 29 of the *Zhuangzi* and is invoked in many early texts as an exemplar of rapine.

ZHONGZI QI was a close friend of the master musician Bo Ya. When he died, Bo Ya broke his *qin* (stringed instrument) because no one else could sufficiently appreciate his playing.

ZHOU GONG (Duke of Zhou, also known as Duke Dan of Zhou [eleventh century B.C.E.]) was a younger brother of King Wu of Zhou. He served as the regent for King Cheng until the latter became old enough to assume the throne. The Duke of Zhou was regarded by Confucius as a paragon of royal virtue.

ZHU MING (also known as Zhu Rong) was a mythical being associated with the south and with the planet Mars.

ZHU RONG. *See* Zhu Ming.

ZHUAN XU was a mythical sage-ruler who supposedly lived during the predynastic era. In some traditions, he is associated with the north and with the planet Mercury, but in other traditions he is associated with the south. He fought a titanic battle with Gong Gong, during which one of the pillars of Heaven was so damaged that the land tilted upward in the northwest.

ZHUANG (King Zhuang of Chu [r. 613–591 B.C.E.]) initially had little interest in government, but through the remonstrance of loyal ministers, he became a competent and forceful leader and rose to be hegemon of the Zhou realm.

ZHUANG QIAO was a man of Chu who led a revolt during the reign of King Huai (r. 328–299 B.C.E.).

ZHUANGZI (Master Zhuang, personal name Zhuang Zhou [fourth century B.C.E.]) was a celebrated Daoist philosopher. The book that bears his name, the *Zhuangzi*, has been shown to be a work of multiple authorship, although some portions might be from the hand of Zhuang Zhou.

ZIFA (late fourth century B.C.E.) served as both a general and a civil official in the state of Chu.

ZIHAN (Sicheng Zihan [sixth century B.C.E.]) was a minister of the state of Song. Although he was renowned for his incorruptibility, his historical reputation is mixed: ultimately, he murdered the lord of Song and usurped his throne.

ZIJIAO and **ZIQI** (fifth century B.C.E.) were paternal uncles of Duke Sheng of Bo.

ZILU (also known as Ji Lu and Zhong You [fifth century B.C.E.]) was a disciple of Confucius. Militarily inclined, he served as a steward to the powerful Ji clan of Lu.

ZIQI and **ZIJIAO** (fifth century B.C.E.) were paternal uncles of Duke Sheng of Bo.

ZISI (fifth century B.C.E.) was a grandson of Confucius and an important thinker in his own right. The text that bears his name, now preserved only as fragments, was a source for the *Huainanzi*.

ZOU YAN (ca. 300 B.C.E.) was a philosopher credited with systematizing the basic properties of yin and yang and the Five Phases of *qi*, and with envisioning the world as a set of nine continents.

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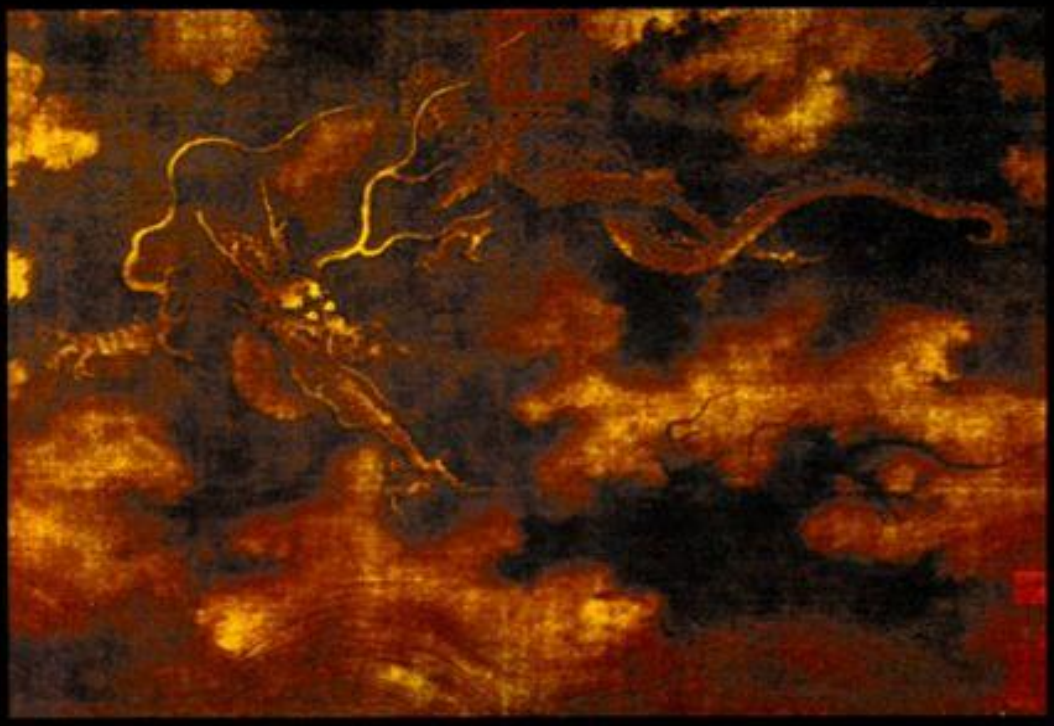
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SHAMBHALA DRAGON EDITIONS

WEN-TZU

Understanding the Mysteries



Further Teachings of

Lao-tzu

Translated by Thomas Cleary

ABOUT THE BOOK

Lao-tzu, the legendary sage of ancient China, is traditionally considered to be the author of the *Tao Te Ching,* one of the most popular classics of world literature. Now Lao-tzu's further teachings on the Tao, or Way, are presented here in the first English translation of the Chinese text known as the *Wen-tzu.* Although previously ignored by Western scholars, the *Wen-tzu* has long been revered by the Chinese as one of the great classics of ancient Taoism. In it, Lao-tzu shows that the cultivation of simplicity and spontaneity is essential to both the enlightened individual and the wise leader. This timeless work will appeal to a broad audience of contemporary readers who have come to consider Lao-tzu's *Tao Te Ching* a classic on the art of living.

THOMAS CLEARY holds a PhD in East Asian Languages and Civilizations from Harvard University and a JD from the University of California, Berkeley, Boalt Hall School of Law. He is the translator of over fifty volumes of Buddhist, Taoist, Confucian, and Islamic texts from Sanskrit, Chinese, Japanese, Pali, and Arabic.

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Wen-tzu

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Introduction

Historical Background of the *Wen-tzu* in the Taoist Tradition

The *Wen-tzu*, also known by the honorific title *Understanding the Mysteries*, is one of the great sourcebooks of Taoism, written more than two thousand years ago. Following the tradition of Lao-tzu, Chuang-tzu, and the Huainan Masters, the *Wen-tzu* covers the whole range of classical Taoist thought and practice. Long neglected by all but initiates, with this English translation the work is now available in a Western language for the first time.

The *Wen-tzu* presents a view of Taoism that is quite different from that projected by Western scholars and more in accord with Taoist conceptions. Its compilation is attributed to a disciple of Lao-tzu, reputed author of the classic *Tao Te Ching*, and most of its contents are attributed to Lao-tzu himself. The assignment of authorship in ancient Taoism is generally symbolic rather than historical. Names may refer not only to supposed individual persons, but also to schools and traditions associated with those individuals or their circles.

According to Taoist tradition, the ancient sage Lao-tzu was not an isolated individual but a member of an esoteric circle. He is believed to have had several disciples, to each of whom he passed on a collection of ancient Taoist teachings. The book known as the *Wen-tzu* is one such collection, elaborating on the teachings of the *Tao Te Ching* in a series of discourses attributed to the ancient master Lao-tzu.

The author of the *Wen-tzu* is supposed to have advised King P'ing of the Chou dynasty, who lived in the eighth century B.C.E. This is hundreds of years before Lao-tzu is believed to have lived, but this dating of the text is purely symbolic. It was during the reign of King P'ing that the reigning house of Chou divided and started to lose the last of its dynastic integrity. After King P'ing, the vassal states began to assert themselves and struggle

for hegemony. The symbolic dating of the *Wen-tzu* therefore indicates that it addresses the needs and problems of an age of transition and uncertainty.

As is the case with other Chinese classics, the early history and transmission of the book of *Wen-tzu* was obscured by the holocausts of the warring states era leading up to the founding of the first empire in the third century B.C.E. The first public notice of the disciple of Lao-tzu who recorded the book is found in *Records of the Grand Historian*, a standard historical work by the eminent Ssu-ma Ch'ien (ca. 145–90 B.C.E.).

A nine-chapter version of the *Wen-tzu* is noticed in a historical work of the first century C.E., where it is listed among texts existing in the earlier Han dynasty (ca. 200 B.C.E–8 C.E.). A twelve-chapter version is noticed in the records of the Sui dynasty (581–618 C.E.). During the brilliant T'ang dynasty (618–905 C.E.), when Taoism flourished under state patronage, the *Wen-tzu* was recognized as an exposition of teachings of the ancient master Lao-tzu and given imperial recognition of its status with an honorific title identifying it as a classic, *T'ung-hsuan chen-ching* (*Tongxuan zhenjing*), "Scripture of Truth on Understanding the Mysteries."

From internal evidence it is clear that the spiritual lineage of the *Wen-tzu* is rooted in the *Tao Te Ching*, the *Chuang-tzu*, and the *Huainan-tzu*. It follows up and elaborates upon the teachings of all of these ancient works.

Shortly after the time of the last-named Taoist classic (second century B.C.E.), the tradition of Lao-tzu's philosophical Taoism went largely underground, while Han Confucianism turned to despotism and Han Taoism took to magic and drugs. The *Wen-tzu* is therefore one of the very few great Taoist classics of the entire Han dynasty; and even though it predates the turn of the millennium, it is already one of the last in the ancient philosophical lineage of Lao-tzu and the *Tao Te Ching*.

Teachings of the *Wen-tzu:* Further Sayings of Lao-tzu

In terms of its contents, the *Wen-tzu* presents a distillation of the teachings of its great predecessors, especially the *Tao Te Ching, Chuang-tzu*, and the *Huianan-tzu*. It particularly follows the latter in its inclusion of selected material from Confucian, Legalist, and Naturalist schools of thought. In addition, the *Wen-tzu* also contains a tremendous amount of other proverbial and aphoristic lore that is not to be found in its predecessors.

Most of the sayings in the *Wen-tzu* are identified as further sayings of Lao-tzu, the Old Master representing the authorship of the *Tao Te Ching*, symbolizing the lineage of the text. A version of Lao-Tzu's work called *Lao-tzu Te Tao Ching* was studied by certain early Legalists and Confucians, and the Taoist form of the classic was studied by Naturalists, and as a follower of the comprehensive tradition of the classical period of Lao-tzu studies, the *Wen-tzu* touches upon the relationships among ideas of the various schools.

The philosophy of the *Wen-tzu* is given a historical setting in order to illustrate its point of view and its relevance to specific human concerns. The perception of the human race and its history presented in the *Wen-tzu* is to some extent typical of classical Taoism, but it also has an individuality in accord with its own position in time, having appeared after centuries of profound disillusionment. The *Wen-tzu*'s description of the fall of humankind from pristine purity provides a traditional framework for the articulation of Taoist ideas. Chapter 172 of the *Wen-tzu* begins in such a manner:

> In high antiquity, real people breathed yin and yang, and all living beings looked up to their virtue, thus harmonizing peacefully. In those times, leadership was hidden, spontaneously creating pure simplicity. Pure simplicity had not yet been lost, so myriad beings were very relaxed.

The expression *real people* frequently encountered in Taoist lore, is particularly prominent in the classics *Chuang-tzu* and *Huainan-tzu*. Technically, it refers to a Taoist adept of a certain level of attainment; generally speaking, real people are those who have realized the Taoist ideal of freedom from artificialities. To say that they "breathed yin and yang," the creative energies of the universe circulating within them, bespeaks the intimacy and directness of the relationship between real people and Nature.

Typically, this closeness with Nature herself is also reflected in the quality of the relationship real people enjoy with other beings. The concealment of the leadership of real people in unobtrusive spontaneity is a correspondingly common Taoist idea, whose classic expression is to be found in the *Tao Te Ching*: "Very great leaders in their domains are only known to exist."

The real people are believed to be hidden naturally, not because they are secretive in the ordinary sense of the word, but because they do not aggrandize themselves or call attention to themselves. Their pure simplicity is spontaneous and unobtrusive, so they foster no divisions and create no tensions. The *Tao Te Ching* says, "When the government is noninvasive, the people are very pure."

Chapter 172 of the *Wen-tzu* goes on to recount the first stages of the deterioration of human society and consciousness.

> Eventually society deteriorated. By the time of Fu Hsi, there was a dawning of deliberate effort; everyone was on the verge of leaving their innocent mind and consciously understanding the universe. Their virtues were complex and not unified.

Fu Hsi is the earliest of the prehistoric culture heroes of China commonly named in Taoist literature. No specific dates are ever ventured for him in Chinese tradition, as Fu Hsi is believed to have lived before the development of agriculture. He is associated with the origins of animal husbandry, and therefore his era is reckoned as one of very great antiquity.

Fu Hsi is also said to have invented the original symbols of the classic *I Ching*, or *Book of Change*, using them as a primitive form of notation. Based on these items of traditional description of Fu Hsi, it is clear why the *Wen-tzu* now uses this figure as a marker for the incipient loss of primeval human innocence and the beginnings of conscious knowledge.

Wen-tzu continues its recital in chapter 172 with reference to other fabled leaders of antiquity:

> Coming to the times when Shen-nung and Huang Ti governed the land and made calendars to harmonize with yin and yang, now all the people stood straight up and thinkingly bore the burden of looking and listening. Therefore they were orderly but not harmonious.

Shen-nung was also a prehistoric culture hero, credited with the development of agriculture and herbal medicine; his wife is said to have begun the practice of silk cultivation and weaving. The *Wen-tzu* makes a point of noting that Shen-nung and his wife both practiced these arts personally as guides and examples for the people.

Huang Ti, the first of the ancient culture heroes to be placed in history, is honored as a student and patron of all the Taoist arts, both exoteric and esoteric, and is credited with the authorship of the first book ever written. The legend of Huang Ti in particular represents the subordination of earthly dominion to the quest for freedom and perfection of the spirit. This did not mean complete relinquishment of concern for the world, but a vision of individual and social life as vessels of a higher and broader development.

As in the case of Fu Hsi, no attempt is traditionally made to place Shen-nung within any sort of definable time frame, even legendary. Huang Ti, in contrast, is believed to have lived in the twenty-seventh century B.C.E, and the Chinese calendar of years begins from the time of his reign. Accordingly, Huang Ti is the first of the great culture heroes who is represented as having been taught by humans and not directly by phenomena as had been Fu Hsi and Shen-nung. He is depicted as having been a warrior and a statesman, later a mystic and a lover.

The condition of the human mind and society in the eras of Shen-nung and Huang Ti, whose idealizations were ordinarily romanticized, are seen from the Taoist perspective of the *Wen-Tzu* as marked by increasing complexity, concern, and potential fragmentation. In the early Han dynasty (206 B.C.E.–8 C.E.) a number of texts symbolically attributed to Huang Ti were commonly studied together with the *Tao Te Ching* by followers of an influential school of political thought known as Huang-Lao, with which the authors of the *Wen-Tzu* undoubtedly had contact.

Fu Hsi, Shen-nung, and Huang Ti are sometimes known collectively as the Three August Ones mentioned here and there in the *Wen-tzu* to represent a certain stage in the evolution of consciousness: "The Three August Ones had no regulations or directives, yet the people followed them." After them, tradition continues, came a series of rulers known as the Five Lords, who "had regulations and directives, but no punishment or penalties." They were followed by the Three Kings, charismatic leaders Yao, Shun, and Yu, whom Confucians regarded as symbols of virtuous government.

In chapter 172, the *Wen-tzu* picks up the thread of its story of the fall of humankind with the Shang or Yin dynasty, which began a thousand years after Huang Ti in the eighteenth century B.C.E. and ended in the twelfth century B.C.E.: "Later, in the society of the times of the Shang-Yin dynasty, people came to relish and desire things, and intelligence was seduced by externals. Essential life lost its reality."

The Shang dynasty produced a highly developed material civilization, but it also learned to practice slavery and political mind-control techniques. The fact that it lasted for more than six hundred years may testify to its power, but the Shang deteriorated and was eventually supplanted by the Chou dynasty (1123 B.C.E.–256 B.C.E.), which was the era of the *Book of Change* and the classical masters of Chinese philosophy, including Kuan-tzu, Sun-tzu, Confucius, and the Taoist giants.

Supposed to have originally been written in the eighth century B.C.E., when the Chou was beginning to decline markedly, the *Wen-tzu* gives a comparatively lengthy description of human corruption and degeneracy in the mind and society of this "latter-day" era:

> Coming to the Chou dynasty, we have diluted purity and lost simplicity, departing from the Way to contrive artificialities, acting on dangerous qualities. The sprouts of cunning and craft have arisen; cynical scholarship is used to pretend to sagehood, false criticism is used to intimidate the masses, elaboration of poetry and prose is used to get fame and honor. Everyone wants to employ knowledge and craft for recognition in society and loses the basis of the overall source.

Having more probably been written about seven hundred years later than the time of its attribution, some two hundred years after the final abolition of even the name of the Chou dynasty, which had moreover been a name

without a reality for many centuries by then, the *Wen-tzu* speaks from the standpoint of a historical perspective on the direction of Chou society that is naturally broader and more accurate than that of the much earlier age to which it is symbolically attributed. Thus in its time it derived authority from both the antiquity of its tradition and the modernity of its outlook.

The human problems addressed in the *Wen-tzu* were concerns articulated by the broad band of philosophers of Chou times: human nature and potential; the relationship of humanity to itself and the world; causes and treatments of social dysfunction.

Within these general ranges of interest, the *Wen-tzu* deals extensively with mental and physical health; social conventions and human behavior; organization and law; statecraft and culture; and the processes of war and peace.

In the Taoist world view of the *Wen-tzu*, mind and body are a continuity, within the individual and within society as a whole. Mental and physical health should therefore support each other, based on sensitively balanced response to needs:

> The way of developed people is to cultivate the body by calmness and nurture life by frugality. . . . To govern the body and nurture essence, sleep and rest moderately, eat and drink appropriately; harmonize emotions, simplify activities. Those who are inwardly attentive to the self attain this and are immune to perverse energies.

The frugality and moderation of the ancient Taoists governed not only their consumption of material goods but also their expenditure of vital energy. Even their material frugality was not only an economic measure and a political gesture, but also a practical reluctance to expend mental energy on superficials. This attitude could therefore be extended to apply to all sorts of uses of attention, which is the focusing or accumulating of the energy of consciousness. The *Wen-tzu* describes some ways of using attention that sap the mind-body continuum of the power in its central core:

> Those who decorate their exteriors harm themselves inside. Those who foster their feelings hurt their spirit. Those who show their embellishments hide their reality.

> Those who never forget to be smart for even a second inevitably burden their essential nature. Those who never forget to put on appearances even on a walk of a hundred steps inevitably burden their physical bodies.
>
> Therefore, beauty of feather harms the skeleton, profuse foliage on the branches hurts the root. No one in the world can have excellence in both.

If extravagance and excess were seen as destructive to the individual, they were considered incomparably more so to society and nature. Greed was believed to be the motive force behind exploitation and destruction of the environment and its inhabitants, including the people caught up in the frenzy:

> Rulers of degenerate ages mined mountain minerals, took the metals and gems, split and polished shells, melted bronze and iron; so nothing flourished. They opened the bellies of pregnant animals, burned the meadowlands, overturned nests and broke the eggs, so phoenixes did not alight, and unicorns did not roam about. They cut down trees to make buildings, burned woodlands for fields, overfished lakes to exhaustion.

The callous rapacity toward nature depicted here could not but extend its influence into the relationships among the human beings competing for the lion's share, and among those fighting for the scraps and leavings of that struggle. The gradual enslavement of both humanity and nature to deliberate contrivance is vividly depicted by the *Wen-tzu* in terms calculated to arouse the self-reflection of the reader in any age:

> Mountains, rivers, valleys, and canyons were divided and made to have boundaries; the sizes of groups of people were calculated and made to have specific numbers. Machinery and blockades were built for defense, the colors of clothing were regulated to differentiate socioeconomic classes, rewards and penalties were meted out to the good and the unworthy. Thus armaments developed and struggle arose; from this there began slaughter of the innocent.

Unlike Legalists and later Confucians under Legalist influence, Taoists did not conclude from this sort of conduct that human nature is in itself evil or possessed of a propensity thereto. They simply concluded that human beings can be influenced and conditioned into behavior that is contrary to their own best interests, and indeed even into thinking that what is harmful to them is actually delightful. This facet of the human psyche is said to be the reason for the origination of the institution of law:

> Law does not descend from heaven, nor does it emerge from earth; it is invented through human self-reflection and self-correction. If you truly arrive at the root, you will not be confused by the branches; if you know what is essential, you will not be mixed up by doubts.

For the very reason that its premises are based on qualities of human character that may appear in anyone of any social class or status, Taoist legalism insists on equality before the law in principle and practice. This principle is also rooted in a sort of operational necessity, the pragmatic fact that law cannot fulfill its function properly or adequately under any other conditions:

> What is established among the lower echelons is not to be ignored in the upper echelons; what is forbidden to the people at large is not to be practiced by privileged individuals.
>
> Therefore when human leaders determine laws, they should first apply them to themselves to test and prove them. So if a regulation works on the rulers themselves, then it may be enjoined on the populace.

Although both recognized law above personality, there remained a critical distinction between Taoist and non-Taoist legal theory in ancient China. For the Taoist, although the law is above questions of individual social status, still it is not an absolute ruler and ultimately must have its source in what is right and just for the time, place, and people it is designed to serve; and the letter of the law itself cannot be its own criterion over time, without the active interpretation and input of authentic insight:

> Laws and regulations are to be adjusted according to the mores of the people; instruments and machines are to be adjusted according to the

> changes of the times. Therefore people who are constrained by rules cannot participate in the planning of new undertakings, and people who are sticklers for ritual cannot be made to respond to changes. It is necessary to have the light of individual perception and the clarity of individual learning before it is possible to master the Way in action.
>
> Those who know where laws come from adapt them to the times; those who do not know the source of ways to order may follow them but eventually wind up with chaos. . . . To sustain the imperiled and bring order to chaos is not possible without wisdom. As far as talking of precedents and extolling the ancient are concerned, there are plenty of ignoramuses who do that. Therefore sages do not act upon laws that are not useful and do not listen to words that have not proven effective.

Here the *Wen-tzu* displays a kind of Taoist thinking that is quite different from the image of antiquarian conservatism sometimes projected by antipathetic scholars looking at fragmentary materials. To understand the different levels of impact such statements delivered, it is useful to remember that in Taoist philosophical writings the word *sage* means an enlightened individual and also a wise leader.

In the context of statecraft it may be thought to ordinarily have the latter meaning, but it also means one who has the potential to become a wise leader, in other words, an enlightened individual.

When the meaning of the enlightened individual is singled out, such statements become revolutionary in nature. This independent attitude emphasizing objective knowledge over conventional conformity eventually forced philosophical Taoism to go underground with the establishment of Confucian orthodoxy in the early Han dynasty. When formal scholarship had become part of a mechanism of exploitation and self-aggrandizement, Taoist thinkers went their own way; hiding their names, they published scathing critiques of corrupt government, like the *Wen-tzu*'s description of a sick society:

> The governments of latter-day society have not stored up the necessities of life; they have diluted the purity of the world, destroyed the simplicity of the world, and made the people confused and hungry, turning clarity into murkiness. Life is volatile, and everyone is striving

> madly. Uprightness and trust have fallen apart, people have lost their essential nature; law and justice are at odds. . . .

Early Taoists and Confucians both observed that excess satiety and excess want, which coexisted because of imbalance in the structure and function of society, tended to distort the human mind even further and foster violence and despair. Therefore both schools recognized the interdependence of human problems, seeing that psychological and social problems had a basis in economic conditions, while economic problems had a basis in psychological and social conditions. Taoist political thinking strives to take both sides of the circle into account:

> If there is more than enough, people defer; if there is less than enough, they compete. When they defer, then courtesy and justice develop; when they compete, then violence and confusion arise. Thus when there are many desires, concerns are not lessened; for those who seek enrichment, competition never ceases. Therefore, when a society is orderly, then ordinary people are persistently upright and cannot be seduced by profits or advantages When a society is disorderly, then people of the ruling classes do evil but the law cannot stop them.

Competition gone to extremes becomes conflict, a subject of central concern to the classical Taoist philosophers. The *Wen-tzu* recapitulates Lao-tzu's *Tao Te Ching* on the subject of warfare, recognizing that the economic cost of war translates directly into human cost above and beyond that of the dead, wounded, widowed, and orphaned:

> Lordly kings enrich their people, despotic kings enrich their lands, nations in danger enrich their bureaucrats. Orderly nations appear to be lacking, lost nations have empty storehouses. Therefore it is said, "When rulers don't exploit them, the people naturally grow rich; when the rulers don't manipulate them, the people naturally become civilized."
>
> When you mobilize an army of one hundred thousand, it costs a thousand pieces of gold per day; there are always bad years after a military expedition. Therefore armaments are instruments of ill omen and are not treasured by cultured people. If you reconcile great

> enemies in such a way that some enmity inevitably remains, how unskillfully you have done it!

Elsewhere the *Wen-tzu* goes even further than *Tao Te Ching* in depicting the horrors wrought by a benighted and warlike society, summing up the classical Taoist teaching on the subject of human degeneracy:

> Rulers and subjects are at odds and not on friendly terms, while relatives are estranged and do not stick together. In the fields there are no standing sprouts, in the streets there are no strollers. Gold lodes are quarried out, gem-stones are all taken, tortoises are captured for their shells and have their bellies removed. Divination is practiced every day; the whole world is disunited. Local rulers establish laws that are each different, and cultivate customs that are mutually antagonistic. They pull out the root and abandon the basis, elaborating penal codes to make them harsh and exacting, fighting with weapons, cutting down common people, slaughtering the majority of them. They raise armies and make trouble, attacking cities and killing at random, overthrowing the high and endangering the secure. They make large assault vehicles and redoubled bunkers to repel combat troops and have their battalions go on deadly missions. Against a formidable enemy, of a hundred that go, one returns; those who happen to make a big name for themselves may get to have some of the annexed territory, but it costs a hundred thousand slain in combat, plus countless numbers of old people and children who die of hunger and cold. After this, the world can never be at peace in its essential life.

Fortunately, even while Taoist thinkers did not shrink from such frank criticism of the society in which they lived, the degradation of human values that they witnessed did not induce in them cynicism or despair. Like Buddhists, they focused on human problems to stimulate themselves to find solutions.

The *Wen-tzu* proposes the possibility of freedom and dignity, for the individual and for humanity as a whole. But freedom and dignity are not without a price, not without responsibilities to the foundations of their very existence. In order to see what the bases of freedom and dignity are, the *Wen-tzu* guides the thinker through the elemental patterns and reasons

underlying the natural order and its reflections in human needs and human behavior.

The Way of Taoism is called simple and easy because it is not as complicated as a culture of manners and appearances, and it is not as hard as a culture of conflict and contentiousness. In its sophistication and comprehensive scope, combined with an accessible format and easy style, the *Wen-tzu* is a crowning work of early Taoism. Like the other classics, its way does not admit of definition by a few clichés, but it does offer many useful summaries of what a Taoist considers a sensible way of life.

One of the simplest sets of statements in the *Wen-tzu*, on three kinds of unnatural death, demonstrates the interpenetration of the individual, professional, social, and political dimensions of Taoist practice. The *Wen-tzu*'s description of these three kinds of unnatural death contains within itself the way to avoid them and live life to the full:

> There are three kinds of death that are not natural passing away: If you drink and eat immoderately and treat the body carelessly and cheaply, then illnesses will kill you.
>
> If you are endlessly greedy and ambitious, then penalties will kill you. If you allow small groups to infringe upon the rights of large masses, and allow the weak to be oppressed by the strong, then weapons will kill you.

The *Wen-tzu* also speaks of four practices through which "the way of government is comprehended," meaning the way of individual self-government as well as the way of government of nations:

> Find out destiny, govern mental functions, make preferences orderly, and suit real nature; then the way of government is comprehended. Find out destiny, and you won't be confused by calamity or fortune. Govern mental functions, and you won't be joyful or angry at random. Make preferences orderly, and you won't crave what is useless. Suit real nature, and your desires will not be immoderate.
>
> When you are not confused by calamity or fortune, then you accord with reason in action and repose. When you are not joyful or angry at random, then you do not flatter people in hopes of reward or in fear of punishment. When you do not crave what is useless, you do not hurt

> your nature by greed. When your desires are not immoderate, then you nurture life and know contentment.
>
> These four things are not sought from without and do not depend on another. They are attained by turning back to oneself.

Finally there is the grand vision of halcyon, an ideal society guided by wisdom, in which all people and all things equally find their places in an organic whole, where they can express their individualities and exercise their particular abilities to the greater good of one and all:

> What the sky covers, what the earth supports, what the sun and moon illuminate, is variegated in form and nature, but everything has its place. What makes enjoyment enjoyable can also create sadness, and what makes security secure can also create danger. Therefore when sages govern people, they see to it that people suit their individual natures, be secure in their homes, live where they are comfortable, work at what they can do, manage what they can handle, and give their best. In this way all people are equal, with no way to overshadow each other.



Wen-tzu



1

Lao-tzu said:

There is something, an undifferentiated whole, that was born before heaven and earth. It has only abstract images, no concrete form. It is deep, dark, silent, undefined; we do not hear its voice. Assigning a name to it, I call it the Way.

The Way is infinitely high, unfathomably deep. Enclosing heaven and earth, receiving from the formless, it produces a stream running deep and wide without overflowing. Opaque, it uses gradual clarification by stillness. When it is applied, it is infinite and has no day or night; yet when it is represented, it does not even fill the hand.

It is restrained but can expand; it is dark but can illumine; it is flexible but can be firm. It absorbs the negative and emits the positive, thus displaying the lights of the sun, moon, and stars.

Mountains are high because of it, oceans are deep because of it, animals run because of it, birds fly because of it. Unicorns roam because of it, phoenixes soar because of it, the stars run their courses because of it.

It secures survival by means of destruction, secures nobility by means of lowliness, and secures advancement by means of retirement. In antiquity the Three August Ones attained the unifying order of the Way and stood in the center; their spirits roamed with Creation, and thus they comforted all in the four quarters.

Thus the Way effects the movement of the heavens and the stability of the earth, turning endlessly like a wheel, flowing ceaselessly like water. It is there at the beginning and end of things: as wind rises, clouds condense, thunder rumbles, and rain falls, it responds in concert infinitely.

It returns the carved and polished to simplicity. It does not contrive to do this but merges with life and death. It does not contrive to express this but communicates virtue. It involves a peaceful happiness that is without pride, thus attaining harmony.

There are myriad differences as the Way facilitates life: it harmonizes dark and light, regulates the four seasons, and tunes the forces of nature. It moistens the vegetable world, permeates the mineral world. The beasts grow large, their coats lustrous; birds' eggs do not break, animals do not die in the womb. Parents do not suffer the grief of losing their children, siblings

do not experience the sadness of losing each other. Children are not orphaned, women are not widowed. Atmospheric signs of ill omen are not seen, robbery and banditry do not occur. All this is brought about by inner virtue.

The natural constant Way gives birth to beings but does not possess them; it produces evolution but does not rule it. All beings are born depending on it, yet none know to thank it; all die because of it, yet none can resent it. It is not enriched by storage and accumulation, nor is it impoverished by disbursement and enjoyment.

It is so ungraspable and undefinable that it cannot be imagined; yet while it is undefinable and ungraspable, its function is unlimited. Profound and mysterious, it responds to evolution without form; successful and effective, it does not act in vain. It rolls up and rolls out with firmness and flexibility; it contracts and expands with darkness and light.



2

Lao-tzu said:

Great people are peaceful and have no longings; they are calm and have no worries. They make the sky their canopy and the earth their car; they make the four seasons their horses and make dark and light their drivers. They travel where there is no road, roam where there is no weariness, depart through no gate.

With the sky as their canopy, nothing is not covered; with the earth as their car, nothing is not borne. With the four seasons as their horses, nothing is not employed; with dark and light as their drivers, nothing is not included. Therefore they are swift without wavering, travel far without tiring. With their bodies unperturbed, their intellects are undiminished, and they see the whole world clearly. This is holding to the essence of the Way and observing the boundless earth.

Therefore the affairs of the world are not to be contrived, but promoted according to their own nature. Nothing can be done to help the changes of myriad beings but to grasp the essential and return to it. Therefore sages cultivate the basis within and do not adorn themselves outwardly with superficialities. They activate their vital spirit and lay to rest their learned opinions. Therefore they are open and uncontrived, yet there is nothing they do not do; they have no rule, yet there is no unruliness.

To be uncontrived means not acting before others. To have no rule means not to change nature. That there is no unruliness means that they go by the mutual affirmation of beings.

3

Lao-tzu said:

Those who hold to the Way to guide the people go along with affairs as they occur and act in accord with what people do. They respond to developments in all beings and harmonize with changes in all events.

So the Way is empty and unreified, even and easy, clear and calm, flexible and yielding, unadulterated and pure, plain and simple. These are concrete images of the Way.

Empty nonreification is the abode of the Way. Even ease is the basis of the Way. Clear calm is the mirror of the Way. Flexible yielding is the function of the Way. Reversal is normal for the Way: flexibility is the firmness of the Way, yielding is the strength of the Way. Unadulterated purity and plain simplicity are the trunk of the Way.

Emptiness means there is no burden within. Evenness means the mind is untrammeled. When habitual desires do not burden you, this is the consummation of emptiness. When you have no likes or dislikes, this is the consummation of evenness. When you are unified and unchanging, this is the consummation of calmness. When you are not mixed up in things, this is the consummation of purity. When you neither grieve nor delight, this is the consummation of virtue.

The government of complete people abandons intellectualism and does away with showy adornment. Depending on the Way, it rejects cunning. It emerges from fairness, in unison with the people. It limits what is kept and minimizes what is sought. It gets rid of seductive longings, eliminates desire for valuables, and lessens rumination.

Limiting what is kept results in clarity; minimizing what is sought results in attainment. Therefore when the external is controlled by the center, nothing is neglected. If you can attain the center, then you can govern the external.

With attainment of the center, the internal organs are calm, thoughts are even, sinews and bones are strong, ears and eyes are clear.

The Great Way is level and not far from oneself. Those who seek it afar go and then return.



4

Lao-tzu said:

Sagehood has nothing to do with governing others but is a matter of ordering oneself. Nobility has nothing to do with power and rank but is a matter of self-realization; attain self-realization, and the whole world is found in the self. Happiness has nothing to do with wealth and status, but is a matter of harmony.

Those who know enough to deem the self important and consider the world slight are close to the Way. Therefore I have said, “Reaching the extreme of emptiness, keeping utterly still, as myriad beings act in concert, I thereby observe the return.”

The Way molds myriad beings but is ever formless. Silent and unmoving, it totally comprehends the undifferentiated unknown. No vastness is great enough to be outside it, no minuteness is small enough to be inside it. It has no house but gives birth to all the names of the existent and nonexistent.

Real people embody this through open emptiness, even easiness, clear cleanness, flexible yielding, unadulterated purity, and plain simplicity, not getting mixed up in things. Their perfect virtue is the Way of heaven and earth, so they are called real people.

Real people know how to deem the self great and the world small; they esteem self-government and disdain governing others. They do not let things disturb their harmony, they do not let desires derange their feelings. Concealing their names, they hide when the Way is in effect and appear when it is not. They act without contrivance, work without striving, and know without intellectualizing.

Cherishing the Way of heaven, embracing the heart of heaven, they breathe darkness and light, exhaling the old and inhaling the new. They close up together with darkness, and open up together with light. They roll up and roll out together with firmness and flexibility, contract and expand together with darkness and light. They have the same mind as heaven, the same body as the Way.

Nothing pleases them, nothing pains them; nothing delights them, nothing angers them. All things are mysteriously the same; there is neither

right nor wrong.

Those who are physically injured by the tortures of extreme climactic conditions find that the spirit is suffocated when the body is exhausted. Those who are psychologically injured by the afflictions of emotions and thoughts find that the body is left over when the spirit is exhausted. Therefore real people deliberately return to essence, relying on the support of spirit, thus attaining completeness. So they sleep without dreams and awake without worries.

5

When Confucius asked him about the Way, Lao-tzu said:

Straighten your body, unify your vision, and the harmony of heaven will arrive. Concentrate your knowledge, rectify your assessment, and the spirit will come to abide. Virtue will be receptive to you, the Way will be there for you.

Gaze straight ahead like a newborn calf, without seeking the wherefore; let your body be like a withered tree and your mind like dead ashes. Realize genuine knowledge, and don't use twisted reasoning. Keep yourself open, unminding, and you may attain clarity and all-around mastery. How could this be unknowing?

6

Lao-tzu said:

Those who serve life adapt to changes as they act. Changes arise from the times; those who know the times do not behave in fixed ways. Therefore I say, "Ways can be guides, but not fixed paths; names can be designated, but not fixed labels."

Writings are produced by words, and words come from knowledge; intellectuals do not know they do not constitute a fixed way. Terms that can be designated do not make books to be treasured. The learned come to an impasse again and again; this is not as good as keeping centered. Put an end to scholasticism, and there will be no worries; put an end to sagacity, abandon knowledge, and the people will benefit a hundredfold.

Human beings are tranquil by birth; this is the celestial nature. Sensing things, they act; this is natural desire. When things come to them, they respond; this is the action of knowledge. When knowledge and things

interact, likes and dislikes arise. When likes and dislikes are formed, knowledge goes to externals and cannot be returned to the self; so the celestial design disappears.

Therefore sages do not replace the celestial by the human. Outwardly they evolve along with things, yet inwardly they do not lose their true state. So those who realize the Way return to clear tranquillity. Those who find out about things end up without contrivance. They nurture the intelligence by calmness, unify the spirit by abstraction, and take to the gate of nothingness.

Those who follow heaven travel with the Way; those who follow humans mix with the vulgar. Therefore sages do not let business disturb the world and do not let desires confuse feelings. They do what is appropriate without scheming; they are trusted without speaking. They succeed without thinking about it, achieve without contriving to do so.

Therefore when they are above, the people do not take it gravely; and when they are in front, others do not attack them. The whole world resorts to them, the treacherous fear them. Because they do not contend with anyone, no one dares to contend with them.

7

Lao-tzu said:

When people lose their essential nature by following desires, their actions are never correct. To govern a nation in that way results in chaos; to govern oneself in that way results in defilement.

Therefore those who do not hear the Way have no means of returning to their essential nature. Those who do not understand things cannot be clear and calm.

The essential nature of the original human being has no perversion or defilement, but after long immersion in things it easily changes, so we forget our roots and conform to a seeming nature.

The essential nature of water likes clarity, but gravel pollutes it. The essential nature of humanity likes peace, but habitual desires damage it. Only sages can leave things and return to self.

Therefore sages do not use knowledge to exploit things and do not let desires disrupt harmony. When they are happy they are not overjoyed, and

when they grieve they are not hopelessly distressed. Thus they are not in danger even in high places; they are secure and stable.

So immediate planning on hearing good words is something that even the ignorant know enough to admire; lofty action in accord with the virtues of sages is something that even the unworthy know enough to look up to.

But while those who admire that are many, those who apply it are few; and while those who look up to that are numerous, those who put it into practice are rare. The reason for this is that they cling to things and are tied to the mundane.

Therefore it is said, “When I contrive nothing, the people evolve on their own. When I strive at nothing, the people prosper on their own. When I enjoy tranquillity, the people correct themselves. When I have no desires, the people are naturally plain.”

Clear serenity is the consummation of virtue. Flexible yielding is the function of the Way. Empty calm is the ancestor of all beings. When these three are put into practice, you enter into formlessness. Formlessness is a term for oneness; oneness means mindlessly merging with the world.

Disbursement of virtue is not overbearing; use of it is not forced. You don’t see it when you look at it, you don’t hear it when you listen to it. It has no form, but forms are born in it. It has no sound, yet all sounds are produced in it. It has no flavor, yet all flavors are formed in it. It has no color, yet all colors are made in it.

So being is born from nonbeing, fulfillment is born from emptiness. There are only five musical notes, yet the variations of those five notes are so many as to be beyond our power to hear. There are only five flavors, yet the variations of those five flavors are so many as to be beyond our power to taste. There are only five colors, but the variations of those five colors are so many as to be beyond our power to see.

In terms of sound, when the first note is established the five notes are defined. In terms of flavor, when sweetness is established the five flavors are determined. In terms of color, when white is established the five colors are formed. In terms of the Way, when the One is established all things are born.

Therefore the principle of oneness applies everywhere. The vastness of the one is evident throughout heaven and earth. Its totality is solid, like an uncarved block. Its dispersal is total, as if in a suspension. Though in suspension, it gradually clears; though empty, it gradually fills. It is

profound as an ocean, broad as the floating clouds. It seems like nothing, yet it exists; it seems to be absent, yet it is there.



8

Lao-tzu said:

The totality of all beings goes through a single opening; the roots of all things emerge from a single gate. Therefore sages measure a track to follow once and do not change the original or vary from the perennial. Freedom is based on following guidance, tact is based on honesty, honesty is based on normalcy.

Joy and anger are deviations from the Way, anxiety and lament are loss of virtue, liking and disliking are excesses of mind, habitual desires are burdens of life. When people become very angry, that destroys tranquillity; when people become very joyful, that dashes positive action. Energy diminished, they become speechless; startled and frightened, they go crazy. Anxiety and lament burn the heart, so sickness builds up. If people can get rid of all these, then they merge with spiritual light.

Spiritual light is attainment of the inward. When people attain the inward, their internal organs are calm, their thoughts are even, their eyes and ears are clear, and their sinews and bones are strong. They are masterful but not contentious, firm and strong yet never exhausted. They are not too excessive in anything, nor are they inadequate in anything.

Nothing in the world is softer than water. The way of water is infinitely wide and incalculably deep; it extends indefinitely and flows boundlessly far. Increase and decrease pass without reckoning. Up in the sky it turns into rain and dew; down in the earth it turns into moisture and wetlands. Beings cannot live without it, works cannot be accomplished without it. It embraces all life without personal preferences. Its moisture reaches even to creeping things, and it does not seek reward. Its wealth enriches the whole world, without being exhausted. Its virtues are disbursed to the farmers, without being wasted. No end to its action can be found. Its subtlety cannot be grasped. Strike it, and it is not damaged; pierce it, and it is not wounded; slash it, and it is not cut; burn it, and it does not smoke. Soft and fluid, it cannot be dispersed. It is penetrating enough to bore through metal and stone, strong enough to submerge the whole world. Whether there is excess or lack, it lets the world take and give. It is bestowed upon all beings

without order of precedence; neither private nor public, it is continuous with heaven and earth. This is called supreme virtue.

The reason water can embody this ultimate virtue is that it is soft and slippery. Therefore I say that the softest in the world drives the hardest in the world; nonbeing enters into no gap.

The formless is the great ancestor of beings; the soundless is the great source of species. Real people communicate with the spiritual directorate; those who participate in evolution as human beings hold mystic virtue in their hearts and employ it creatively like a spirit.

Therefore the unspoken Way is very great indeed. It changes customs and mores without any orders being given. It is only mental action: all things have results, but it only goes to the root; all affairs have consequences, but it only stays by the gate. Thereby it is possible to find the end of the endless and the ultimate of the infinite, to perceive things without being blinded and to respond echolike without minding.

9

Lao-tzu said:

Those who attain the Way are weak in ambition but strong at work; their minds are open and their responses are fitting. Those weak in ambition are flexible and yielding, peaceful and quiet; they hide in nonacquisitiveness and pretend to be inexpert. Tranquil and uncontrived, when they act they do not miss the timing.

Therefore nobility must be rooted in humility, loftiness must be based on lowliness. Use the small to contain the great; remain in the center to control the external. Behave flexibly, but be firm, and there is no power you cannot overcome, no enemy you cannot rise above. Respond to developments, assess the times, and no one can harm you.

Those who would be firm must preserve it with flexibility; those who would be strong must protect it with weakness. Accumulate flexibility and you will be firm; accumulate weakness and you will be strong. Observe what they accumulate and you will know who will survive and who will perish.

Those who overcome the lesser by strength come to a standoff when they meet their equals. Those who overcome the greater by flexibility have power that cannot be measured. Therefore when an army is strong it

perishes, when a tree is strong it breaks, when leather is strong it rips; the teeth are harder than the tongue, but they are the first to die.

So flexibility and yielding are the administrators of life, hardness and strength are the soldiers of death. To take the lead is the road to exhaustion; to act afterward is the source of success.

Holding to the Way in order to be a partner to evolution involves leading to regulate following, and following to regulate leading. What is this? It means not losing the means of regulating people, which people themselves cannot control.

Following means combining the elements of events in such a way as to harmonize with the times. Changes in the times do not allow rest in the intervals: if you act in advance, that is going too far; if you act too late, you cannot catch up.

As the days pass and the months go by, time does not dally with people. That is why sages do not value a huge gem as much as they value a little time. Time is hard to find and easy to lose.

Therefore sages carry out their business according to the time and accomplish works according to the resources. They keep to the way of purity and are faithful to the discipline of the feminine. As they go along and respond to changes, they always follow and do not precede. Flexible and yielding, they are thereby calm. Peaceful and easygoing, they are thereby secure. Those who attack the great and overthrow the strong cannot contend with them.

10

Lao-tzu said:

When a mechanical mind is hidden within, then pure innocence is not unadulterated. As for those in whom spiritual qualities are not complete, who knows how far destructiveness can go? As for those in whose hearts all malicious feelings are completely forgotten, they could even take a hungry tiger by the tail, let alone other people.

Those who embody the Way are free and never come to a dead end. Those who let calculation run their lives work hard without accomplishment. Rigid laws and harsh punishments are not the work of great leaders; whipping the horse over and over is not the way to ride a long distance.

When likes and dislikes proliferate, troubles follow along. Therefore the laws of ancient monarchs were not something made up, but what was relied upon; their prohibitions and punishments were not something contrived, but what was observed.

Therefore the ability to go on what is already there leads to greatness, while artificiality leads to pettiness; the ability to observe what is already there leads to security, while contrivance leads to defeat.

Those who let their eyes and ears look at and listen to whatever they may, tire their minds thereby and so lack clarity. Those who use intellectual rumination to exercise control, pain their minds thereby and accomplish nothing.

If you rely on the talents of a single person, it is hard to succeed; if you cultivate the abilities of a single person, that is not enough to govern a house and garden. If you follow the logic of true reason and go by the naturalness of heaven and earth, then the whole universe is no match for you. Hearing is lost to repudiation and praise, the eyes become licentious through color and form. Manners are indeed insufficient to prevent attachment, but a sincere mind can embrace far and wide.

So no weapon is sharper than will, no brigand is greater than yin and yang. The great brigand is concealed in the body and speaks not of good measure; the middling brigand hides in the mountains, the small brigand retreats into the midst of the populace. Therefore it is said that when the people have a lot of cunning and cleverness, then strange things arise in profusion; when an abundance of laws and imperatives are promulgated, there are many thieves and bandits. Get rid of all that, and calamities will not arise. Thus to govern a nation by cunning is detrimental to the nation; not to govern a nation by cunning is beneficial to the nation.

The formless is great, the formed is small; the formless is much, the formed is little. The formless is powerful, the formed is weak; the formless is substantial, the formed is empty. The formed accomplishes works, the formless initiates beginnings. That which accomplishes works makes tools, that which initiates beginnings is unspoiled. What has form has sound; what has no form has no sound. The formed is born from the formless, so the formless is the beginning of the formed.

Breadth and richness are famed; what is famed is considered noble and complete. Frugality and austerity are nameless; what is nameless is considered low and insignificant. Wealth is famed; what is famed is

honored and favored. Poverty is nameless; what is nameless is despised and considered disgraceful. The masculine is famed; what is famed is distinguished. The feminine is nameless; what is nameless is concealed. Abundance is famed; what is famed is given high status. Lack is nameless; what is nameless is given low status. What has merit has a name; what has no merit has no name.

The named is born from the nameless; the nameless is the mother of the named. On the Way, existence and nonexistence produce each other; difficulty and ease create each other. Therefore sages hold to the open calm and subtlety of the Way, whereby they perfect their virtues. Therefore when one has the Way one has virtue; when one has virtue one has merit; when one has merit one has fame; when one has fame one returns to the Way, merit and fame thus lasting forever, never to be blamed all one's life.

Kings and lords are famed for their works, orphans and paupers are not famed for their works; therefore sages refer to themselves as alone and poor, returning to the root. Their works are accomplished without possessiveness, so nonachievement is considered beneficial, while namelessness is considered functional.

In ancient times people were innocent and didn't know east from west. There was no disparity between their appearances and their feelings, or between their words and their actions. Their actions emerged without adornment, their speech was not embellished. Their clothes were warm rather than colorful, their weapons were blunt, with no edge. Their movements were slow, their gaze was blank. They dug wells to drink, plowed fields to eat. They did not distribute goods and did not seek rewards. The high and the low did not overturn each other, the long and the short did not define each other.

Customs that are equivalent in common usage can be followed; work that is possible for everyone is easily done. Haughty artificialities that fool society and perilous behavior that deludes the masses are not used by sages to make popular customs.

11

Lao-tzu said:

As heaven reaches its heights and earth reaches its depths, as sun and moon shine, as the stars twinkle, as yin and yang harmonize, there is no

contrivance in any of this. Make the way right, and things will spontaneously be natural.

It is not yin and yang and the four seasons that give birth to myriad beings; it is not timely showers of rain and dew that nurture the plants and trees: when the spirits are connected and yin and yang harmonize, then myriad beings are born.

The Way stores vitality within and lodges spirit in mind. Calm and unbounded, serene and light, joyful and harmonious, the heart is open and formless, tranquil and soundless. There seems to be no business in the government offices, there seem to be no people at court. There are no hermits and no refugees, no forced labor and no unjust punishment.

Everyone in the land looks up to the virtues of the leadership and emulates its ideals, which are retold in different languages and reach other nations with different customs, so that people can observe them even at a distance. It is simply that the leadership extends its sincerity throughout the world.

Therefore to reward the good and punish the violent is correct order. What makes it operable is pure sincerity. Although directives may be clear, they cannot be carried out alone, but must await pure sincerity. So if leadership is exercised over people but people do not follow, it is because pure sincerity is not there.

12

Lao-tzu said:

Heaven sets up the sun and moon, arrays the stars and planets, sets out the four seasons, and tunes darkness and light. It warms by means of the sun, gives rest by means of the night, dries by means of the wind, and moistens by means of the rain and dew. As it gives birth to beings, no one can see it nurturing, yet all beings grow. As it kills beings, no one can see it destroying, yet all beings pass away. This is called sacred and miraculous.

Therefore sages emulate this: when they promote blessings, no one sees how they do it, yet blessings arise; and when they remove calamities, no one sees how it happens, yet calamities disappear. It cannot be found out by inquiry, yet when examined it is not unreal. Calculating short-term, there is lack; but calculating long-term, there is extra.

Silent and voiceless, yet moving the world tremendously with a single word—such are those who move evolution by means of the celestial mind. Thus when pure sincerity forms within, its energy moves heaven: auspicious stars appear, yellow dragons descend, phoenixes arrive, flavorful springs emerge, fine grains grow, the rivers do not overflow, the oceans do not have tidal waves.

But if we oppose heaven and are violent toward beings, then the sun and moon will be eclipsed, the stars will deviate from their courses, the four seasons will impinge upon one another, days will be dark and nights will be light, mountains will crumble and rivers dry up, there will be thunderstorms in winter and frost in summer.

Heaven and humanity have interconnections, so when nations perish, the signs of heaven change. When the morals of society are chaotic, rainbows appear. Myriad beings have interconnections, vitality and energy have ways of thinning each other out. Therefore the sacred and miraculous cannot be fabricated artificially by knowledge and cannot be forced to happen by exertion of strength.

So great people join virtues with heaven and earth, join lights with sun and moon, join hearts with ghosts and spirits, and join trustworthiness with the four seasons. Embracing the mind of heaven and the energy of earth, they hold to harmony and absorb its peace. They travel the four seas without leaving their houses, changing customs so that people change for the better in such a manner that it seems like it came from themselves. Such are those who are capable of exercising spiritual influence.

13

Lao-tzu said:

The human Way is to keep essence complete, preserve reality, and not damage the body: then in emergencies, when pressed by difficulty, one's purity reaches to heaven. If one never leaves the source, what action would not be successful? Death and life are in the same realm and cannot threaten or overbear. How much more is this true of that which governs heaven and earth, presides over myriad beings, restores creative evolution, embraces perfect harmony, and itself never dies.

When pure sincerity forms within, it is outwardly realized in other people's hearts. This is the Way that is not transmitted. When sages are in

high positions they embrace the Way and do not speak, yet the benefit extends to all the people. Therefore the unspoken teaching is very great indeed. When the hearts of rulers and subjects are at odds and they oppose and deceive each other, it is seen in heaven. The correspondence of spirit and energy is evident. This is called unspoken explanation, unarticulated guidance.

To summon those far away, let there be no contrivance; to approach those near at hand, speak without scheming. Only those who travel by night can have this. That is why running horses are retired to manure the fields. When the tracks of the car do not reach distant places, this is called running while sitting, remaining inconspicuous.

The Way of heaven has no personal preferences or personal rejection: those who are capable have more than enough, those who are incapable have less than enough; those who follow it gain benefit, those who oppose it are unlucky. Therefore those who govern by intellectual knowledge can hardly maintain a nation; this is possible only for those who unite with the great harmony and keep natural responsiveness.

14

Lao-tzu said:

The Way and virtue are like reeds and rushes: if you consider them far apart, yet they are near; but if you consider them close, they are disparate. If you investigate them you cannot grasp them, but if you look into them they are not empty.

Therefore sages are like mirrors: they do not take and do not seek, but respond without concealing anything or causing any harm. To attain this is to lose it, to lose it is to attain it.

Therefore those who commune with universal harmony are dark as if dead drunk, lying there blissfully, thus roaming within it. If they never leave the source, this is called great communion.

This is using nonuse to achieve usefulness.

15

Lao-tzu said:

In ancient times, when the Yellow Emperor governed the land, he tuned the courses of the sun and moon, governed the energies of yin and yang,

regulated the measures of the four seasons, corrected the calculations of the calendar, defined the places of men and women, clarified above and below, prevented the strong from overshadowing the weak, and saw to it that the majority did not harm minorities.

The people lived out their lives and did not die prematurely, the crops ripened in season and did not fail. Officials were upright and unbiased, rulers and ruled were harmonious and had no resentments. Laws and directives were clear and not obscure, helpers were fair and not obsequious. Tillers of the fields conceded boundaries, lost articles were not picked up on the roads, merchants did not overcharge.

Therefore in those times the sun, moon, stars, and planets did not deviate from their courses, wind and rain were timely, and all the cereal crops were abundant. Phoenixes flew over the gardens, unicorns roamed in the countryside.

When Fu Hsi ruled the land, he slept on a stone pillow and a rope bed. He slaughtered in autumn and was frugal through the winter. He bore the square earth and embraced the round sky. Where yin and yang stagnated, he opened them up and set them in order; when adverse energies that attacked beings and harmed the people built up, he put a stop to them.

His people were innocent and didn't know east from west; their gaze was blank and their movements were slow. Unconsciously they satisfied themselves without knowing where it came from. They roamed around without knowing any base, fed themselves without knowing where to go. In those times the beasts, insects, and reptiles all kept their claws and fangs withdrawn and withheld their poison. His achievements brought order to heaven and earth.

Then when the Yellow Emperor came along, he unified the descendants of the great ancestor but did not show his accomplishments or elevate his name. He concealed the path of the real people to follow the necessity of heaven and earth. What does this mean? The virtues of the Way were communicated above, so knowledge faded out.

16

Lao-tzu said:

If the sky were not steady, the sun and moon would have nowhere to ride. If the earth were not steady, plants and trees would have nowhere to stand.

If the body is not steady, right and wrong have nowhere to form.

Therefore there is real knowledge only when there are real people. If what it holds is not clear, how do we know that what we call knowledge is not unknowing?

They are humane who have long been generous with valuable goods to make all the people happy, so that they enjoy their lives. They are dutiful who do great works and make known an inspiring reputation, comprehend leadership and administration, make the social order correct, make kinship and strangerhood clear, keep endangered nations in existence, perpetuate societies that have broken down, and foster those who have no posterity.

They are virtuous who close their senses, put away their aspirations and intentions, cast off their intellectual brilliance, and return to a vastness where there is no conscious knowing, meander beyond the dust and dirt, roam in the realm where there is nothing of concern, drink in darkness and spew out light, and harmonize with all beings and all things.

Therefore when the Way disperses, it becomes virtue, when virtue overflows it becomes humaneness and dutifulness. When humanity and duty are set up, the Way and virtue go out of fashion.

17

Lao-tzu said:

Those whose spirits are scattered are flowery in their speech. Those whose virtue is wiped out are hypocritical in their actions. When vitality sprouts within so that speech and action are visible in the outside world, then one cannot avoid serving things with one’s body.

Vitality can be exhausted by sadness, but there is no end to activity: if what you hold to is uncertain, in the external world you will indulge indiscriminately in worldly fashions.

Therefore sages inwardly cultivate the arts of the Way and do not put on an external show of humanitarianism and dutifulness. To know what is good for the senses and the body and roam in the harmony of the vital spirit is the roaming of the sage.

18

Lao-tzu said:

As to the roaming of sages, they move in utter emptiness, let their minds meander in the great nothingness; they run beyond convention and go through where there is no gateway. They listen to the soundless and look at the formless; they are not constrained by society and not bound to its customs.

So that whereby sages move the world is not exceeded by real people; that whereby good people rectify social customs is not observed by sages. When people are caught up in social customs, they are inevitably bound physically and drained mentally; therefore they cannot avoid being burdened.

Those who allow themselves to be tied down are always those whose lives are directed from outside.

19

Lao-tzu said:

When leaders of humanity think, their spirits do not race in their chests, their knowledge is not displayed throughout the four quarters, but they embrace the heart of benevolence and sincerity: sweet rain falls in season, the five cereals flourish, growing in spring, maturing in summer, harvested in autumn, and stored in winter; there are monthly reviews and seasonal reports, and at the end of the year tithes are paid.

They nurture the people fairly; authority is not commanding, the legal system is not complicated, education is spiritual. The laws are broad, the punishments easygoing, the prisons are empty. The whole land has the same mores, and no one harbors treachery at heart. This is the grace of sages.

If those above are acquisitive and have no measure, then those below will be ambitious and have no deference. When the people are poor and miserable, then division and conflict arise; they work hard without success, cunning sprouts up and a lot of thievery appears. Rulers and ruled resent each other, and directives are not carried out.

When water is polluted, the fishes gasp; when government is cruel, the people rebel. When those above have many desires, those below have many tricks. When those above are stirred up, those below are uneasy. When those above have many demands, those below enter into conflicts. To try to cure the outgrowths without taking care of the root is no different from

breaking down a dam to stop a flood, or trying to put out a fire with a bundle of kindling in your arms.

Sages minimize their affairs, which are thus orderly. They seek to have little, and thus are sufficed; they are benevolent without trying, trusted without speaking. They gain without seeking, succeed without striving. They take naturalness to heart, preserve ultimate reality, embrace the Way, and promote sincerity, so the whole world follows them as echoes respond to sounds, as shadows imitate forms. What they work on is the root.

20

Lao-tzu said:

Those whose vital spirit is scattered outwardly and whose intellectual ruminations ramble inwardly cannot govern their bodies. When what the spirit employs is distant, then what it loses is nearby.

So know the world without going out the door, know the weather without looking out the window; the further out it goes, the less knowledge is. This means that when pure sincerity emerges from within, spiritual energy moves in heaven.

21

Lao-tzu said:

All beings resort to the light of the winter sun and the shade of the summer sun, without anyone coercing them to do so. In an extremely natural way, by the sensitivity of ultimate vitality, they come without being called and go without being sent. It is a profound mystery, and no one knows what does it, but the effects develop spontaneously.

When you depend on eyes to see and depend on words to give direction, it is hard to deal with government. Once there was a prime minister who could not speak, but under his administration there were no harsh punishments; so why esteem words? There was also a prime minister who was blind, but under his administration there was no corruption in government; so why esteem sight? The command that is not spoken, the vision that does not look, are means whereby sages become leaders.

When people are influenced by rulers, they do not follow their words but their actions. Therefore if rulers admire bravery, then even if they do not deliberately cause competition and conflict, their countries have many

difficulties and will eventually be thrown into disorder by plunder and killing. If rulers admire physical beauty, then even if they do not permit license, their countries are benighted and unruly, and will gradually develop the problems caused by licentiousness.

Therefore the pure sincerity of sages is distinct within, while likes and dislikes are clear outside. They speak in such a way as to reflect feelings, give orders in such a way as to clarify directions.

So penalties are not enough to change customs, executions are not enough to stop treachery. Only spiritual influence is valuable.

When purity is perfect, it is spiritual. The movement caused by a pure heart is like the life-giving influence of the air of spring and the death-dealing influence of the air of autumn.

Thus to be a leader is like shooting an arrow; a tiny deviation at the outset results in a miss by a wide margin. This is why those who govern others are careful about how they influence them.

22

Lao-tzu said:

If laws are set up and a system of rewards established, and yet this cannot influence customs or change morals, this means the embrace of the sincere heart is lacking.

So listen to people's music and you know their manners; observe them at play and you know their customs. When you see their customs, you know their development.

Those who embrace reality and exercise true sincerity move the spirits of heaven and earth beyond conventions and outside of commands and prohibitions. They make their way and attain their aspiration by sincerity. Even if they don't say a single word, nevertheless all the people in the world, the birds and beasts, the ghosts and spirits, evolve along with them.

Therefore great rulers exercise spiritual influence, those next best make it impossible to do wrong. The lesser ones reward the good and punish the violent.

23

Lao-tzu said:

The great Way has no contrivance. Without contrivance, there is no possessiveness. Not being possessive means not dwelling. Not dwelling means being formless. Formlessness is imperturbable. Being imperturbable means there is nothing to say. When there is nothing to say, there is quietude, without sound or form.

The soundless and formless cannot be seen or heard. This is called subtle and spiritual. Continuously seeming to be present, it is called the root of heaven and earth.

The Way has no form or sound, so sages have deliberately depicted it as a unity and named it the Way of the universe.

The great is based on the small, much begins with little. Rulers consider heaven and earth goods and all beings resources.

Merit and virtue are considered most great, power and fame are considered most valuable. The beauties of twin qualities match heaven and earth, so it is imperative to keep to the great Way as the mother of the world.

24

Lao-tzu said:

Help the poor and needy, and a reputation is born. Promote what is beneficial and eliminate what is harmful, and merit is established. When there are no troubles in the world, even sages have nowhere to distribute their graces. When the upper and lower classes are on good terms with each other, even philanthropists have no projects to undertake.

Therefore the government of complete people is imbued with virtue and embraces the Way, promoting truthfulness and happily disbursing inexhaustible knowledge. Rhetoric is laid to rest and left unspoken, yet the world does not know to esteem those who do not speak.

So a way that can be articulated is not a permanent Way, and names that can be designated are not permanent labels. Whatever is written or inscribed and can be handed on to others is crude generalization.

The idealized leaders of antiquity did different things but with the same intentions; they took different roads to the same goal. Latter-day scholars, not knowing the unity of the Way or the totality of virtue, take up the traces of things that have already happened and sit around talking about them. Even if they are very studious and learned, they cannot avoid confusion.

25

Lao-tzu said:

The vital essence of mind can be influenced spiritually but cannot be guided by talk. The fact that sages can govern the world without leaving their chairs is because feelings reach farther than words.

So when there is trust in verbal agreements, the trust is there before the words. When there is action on common directions, the sincerity of the action is there apart from the directives.

When sages are in positions of leadership, the people are influenced as if spiritually, being led by means of feelings. When those on top act without drawing a response from those below, that means feelings and directives are at variance.

The fact that a three-month-old infant does not know what is beneficial and what is harmful, and a loving mother is therefore the more attentive in caring for it, is a matter of feeling.

So the function of speaking is small, while the unspoken function is great. Trust is the word of the ideal person, faithfulness is the will of the ideal person. When faithfulness and trust are formed within, their influence causes an outward response. This is the culture of the wise and the sage.

26

Lao-tzu said:

When children die for their parents, or subjects die for their rulers, it is not that they go out and die in search of fame, but that the feeling of gratitude has been stored within to such a degree that they do not avoid the trouble.

What grieves ideal people is not what is just being done, but what comes from within, for they observe what it will lead to. Sages are not ashamed of appearances, ideal people are careful even when alone. If you neglect what is nearby in hopes of what is far off, you will be thwarted.

Therefore when sages are in positions of leadership, the people are happy with their government; when sages are among the masses, people look up to their ideas. In their determination they do not forget the desire to help others.

27

Lao-tzu said:

If an entire army gets out of the way at a single shout of a brave warrior, that is because of the truthfulness from which it emerged. If proposals do not meet with cooperation and ideas are not taken up, there must be some who are not in harmony. Those who can bring order to the world without leaving their chairs seek it from themselves.

So facial expressions can reach where talk cannot, and feelings may reach where expressions cannot. What is felt in the mind emerges to form the body. The attainment of enlightenment may be contacted physically but cannot be sought by looking.

28

Lao-tzu said:

Words have a source, works have a basis. If you lose the source and the basis, even if your skills are many it is better to speak little. What harms the people is craft, so if the clever have their fingers cut off, that shows it is not well to exercise great craft.

Therefore masters act by knowledge, not by talent. They are guarded, according to the time, without consciousness of being guarded. So whatever is deliberately closed is eventually opened.

29

Lao-tzu said:

The endeavors of sages take different routes but have the same goal. Survival and extinction, stability and instability, are as one to them; in their determination they do not forget the desire to help others.

So the songs of various regions sound different, but all are happy; the dirges of other nations sound different, but all are sad. That is because song is an evidence of happiness, while mourning is an effect of sadness. What is deep within emerges outwardly, so it is a matter of how impressions are made.

The mind of sages does not forget the desire to help others, day or night; and the extent to which its benefit reaches is far indeed.

30

Lao-tzu said:

When people govern by inaction, this is contrived, and so it is harmful. Those who govern by inaction are deliberately being inactive, and those who act in a deliberately contrived manner cannot be uncontrived. Those who cannot be uncontrived cannot be creative.

If people say nothing but their spirits are talking, this is harmful. If they say nothing but their spirits are putting on the act of saying nothing, this is harmful to the spirit that is spiritual.

31

Lao-tzu said:

Those whom we call sages rest peacefully in their places according to the time and enjoy their work as appropriate to the age.

Sadness and happiness are deviations of virtue, likes and dislikes are a burden to the mind, joy and anger are excesses on the way.

Therefore their birth is the action of heaven, their death is the transformation of things.

When still, you merge with the quality of darkness; when active, you are on the same wave as light.

So mind is the master of form, spirit is the jewel of mind. When the body is worked without rest, it collapses; when vitality is used without rest, it is exhausted. Therefore sages, heedful of this, do not dare to be excessive.

They use nonbeing to respond to being and are sure to find out the reason; they use emptiness to receive fullness and are sure to find out the measure. They pass their lives in peaceful serenity and open calm, neither alienating anyone nor cleaving to anyone.

Embracing virtue, they are warm and harmonious, thereby following Heaven, meeting with the Way, and being near to virtue. They do not start anything for profit or initiate anything that would cause harm. Death and life cause no changes in the self, so it is called most spiritual. With the spirit, anything that is sought can be found, and anything that is done can be accomplished.

32

Lao-tzu said:

Consider the world light, and the spirit is not burdened; consider myriad things slight, and the mind is not confused. Consider life and death equal, and the intellect is not afraid; consider change as sameness, and clarity is not obscured.

Perfected people lean on a pillar that is never shaken, travel a road that is never blocked, are endowed from a resource that is never exhausted, and learn from a teacher that never dies. They are successful in whatever they undertake, and arrive wherever they go. Whatever they do, they embrace destiny and go along without confusion. Calamity, fortune, profit, and harm cannot trouble their minds.

Those who act justly can be pressed by humanitarianism but cannot be threatened by arms; they can be corrected by righteousness but cannot be hooked by profit. Ideal people will die for justice and cannot be stayed by riches and rank.

Those who act justly cannot be intimidated by death; much less can those who do not act at all. Those who do not act deliberately have no burdens. Unburdened people use the world as the marker of a sundial: above they observe the ways of perfected people to delve deeply into the meanings of the Way and Virtue; below they consider the behaviors customary in the world, which are enough to induce a feeling of shame.

Not doing anything with the world is the drum announcing learning.

33

Lao-tzu said:

Rank, power, and wealth are things people crave, but when compared to the body they are insignificant. Therefore sages eat enough to fill emptiness and maintain energy, and dress sufficiently to cover their bodies and keep out the cold. They adjust to their real conditions and refuse the rest, not craving gain and not accumulating much.

Clarifying their eyes, they do not look; quieting their ears, they do not listen. Closing their mouths, they do not speak; letting their minds be, they do not think. Abandoning intellectualism, they return to utter simplicity; resting their vital spirit, they detach from knowledge. Therefore they have no likes or dislikes. This is called great attainment.

To get rid of pollution and eliminate burdens, nothing compares to never leaving the source. Then what action will not succeed?

Those who know how to nurture the harmony of life cannot be hooked by profit. Those who know how to join inside and outside cannot be seduced by power.

Beyond where there is no beyond is most great; within where there is no within is most precious. If you know the great and precious, where can you go and not succeed?

34

Lao-tzu said:

Those who practiced the Way in ancient times ordered their feelings and nature and governed their mental functions, nurturing them with harmony and keeping them in proportion. Enjoying the Way, they forgot about lowliness; secure in Virtue, they forgot about poverty.

There was that which by nature they did not want, and since they had no desire for it they did not get it. There was that which their hearts did not enjoy, and since they did not enjoy it they did not do it.

Whatever had no benefit to essential nature they did not allow to drag their virtue down; whatever had no advantage for life they did not allow to disturb harmony. They did not let themselves act or think arbitrarily, so their measures could be regarded as models for the whole world.

They ate according to the size of their bellies, dressed to fit their bodies, lived in enough room to accommodate them, acted in accord with their true condition.

They considered the world extra and did not try to possess it; they left everyone and everything to themselves and did not seek profit. How could they lose their essential life because of poverty or riches, high or low social status?

Those who are like this can be called able to understand and embody the Way.

35

Lao-tzu said:

The energy that people receive from nature is one in terms of the feelings of the senses toward sound, form, scent, and temperature. But the way in

which it is managed differs, in that some die thereby, and some live thereby; some become exemplary people, some become petty people.

The spirit is where knowledge gathers; when the spirit is clear, knowledge is illumined. Knowledge is the seat of the heart; when knowledge is objective, the heart is even.

The reason people use limpid water for a mirror, not a moving stream, is that it is clear and still. Thus when the spirit is clear and the attention is even, it is then possible to discern people's true conditions.

Therefore use of this inevitably depends on not exploiting. When a mirror is clear, dust does not dirty it; when the spirit is clear, habitual cravings do not delude it.

So if the mind goes anywhere, the spirit is there in a state of arousal; if you return it to emptiness, that will extinguish compulsive activity, so it can be at rest. This is the freedom of sages. This is why those who would govern the world must realize the true condition of nature and life before they can do so.

36

Lao-tzu said:

Those whom we call sages suit their real conditions, that is all: they eat according to the size of their bellies, dress according to the size of their bodies. Since they moderate themselves, there is no way for an attitude polluted by greed to arise in their minds.

So to be able to rule the world it is essential to have nothing to do with the world. To be able to handle fame it is essential to do nothing excessive to get it. When you arrive in truth at the real condition of nature and life, humanity and justice will come along.

If there is nothing shrouding the spirit, and nothing burdening the mind, you are completely clear and thoroughly in tune, peaceful and unconcerned. Power and profit cannot tempt you, sound and form cannot seduce you; speechmakers cannot sway you, intellectuals cannot move you, warriors cannot frighten you. This is the freedom of real people.

That which creates creation is not created; that which evolves evolution does not evolve. Those who do not arrive at this Way may have knowledge encompassing heaven and earth, illumination reflecting the sun and moon, logic like linking rings, and rhetoric like gold and jewels, yet none of it will

be of any benefit to governing the world. Therefore sages do not lose what they keep.

37

Lao-tzu said:

Quiet abstraction and lightness of heart are ways of nurturing life. Harmonious happiness and empty selflessness are ways of securing virtue.

When externals do not disturb you within, then your nature finds what suits it; when quietude does not affect harmony, then virtue rests in its place.

If you always nurture life and embrace virtue, this can be called ability to understand and embody the Way.

When that is the case, there is no stagnating blockage in the blood vessels, no accumulated energies in the organs; neither calamity nor fortune can upset you, neither censure nor praise can defile you.

Who can be successful unless they have their time? Even if people have the talent, if they don't meet the time, they still cannot get free themselves, especially if they are lacking in the Way.

The ears of someone whose eyes are examining the tip of a fine hair do not hear a peal of thunder; the eyes of someone whose ears are tuning a musical instrument do not see an enormous mountain. Thus when there is a fixation of attention on small things, then there is forgetfulness of great things.

Now everything comes and uses our lives, taking of our vitality as if from a spring. Even if we want to refuse to be subject to this, can we?

Now if we would clarify a bowl of water, it takes at least a day before we can see our eyebrows and eyelashes reflected in it; but it only takes one shake to make it so turbid that we cannot see anything in it. Like a bowl of water, the vital spirit in human beings is hard to clarify and easy to muddle.

38

Lao-tzu said:

The highest sages emulate natural law, the next best esteem the wise, the lowest leave things to ministers. Leaving things to ministers is a way to danger and destruction, esteeming the wise is a source of folly and confusion, emulating natural law is the way to govern heaven and earth.

Empty calm is the main point: there is nothing emptiness does not take in, nothing that calmness does not sustain. If you know the way of empty calm, then you can finish what you start. That is why sages regard calmness as order and disturbance as disorder.

So it is said, “Do not be disturbed, do not be frightened, all things will clarify themselves. Do not be upset, do not be startled; all things will order themselves.” This is called the Way of natural law.

39

Lao-tzu said:

Emperors and lords consider the whole empire or the entire nation to be their house, and all things their belongings. If they take to heart the greatness of the land and are possessive of the multitude of people and things in it, then they become full of energy and unrestrained in their ambitions. The larger ones launch armed invasions of the smaller ones, the smaller ones haughtily look down upon their subjects.

To use the mind for purposes of pride and aggrandizement is like a gusty wind or a violent storm; it cannot last long. Therefore sages control this by means of the Way, holding to unity, contriving nothing, and thus not diminishing harmonious energy.

They see the small and remain flexible; they are retiring and not possessive. They emulate the rivers and seas; because the rivers and seas do not act on purpose, they come to be known for their merits by a natural process of development.

Because they do not coerce, they are able to fulfill leadership. Being as a female to the world, they are able to avoid spiritual death. Because they take care of themselves, they are able to fulfill nobility.

Everything contributes to the effect and repute of material power; the responsibility of authority is most serious, so it does not allow self-depreciation. Self-depreciation leads to failure in achievement and reputation.

On the Way, the great is made by the small, much is based on little. Therefore sages preside over the world by means of the Way: being flexible and yielding, vague and subtle, they see the small; being frugal and austere, they see the little. Because they see the small, they can achieve the great; because they see the little, they can achieve the beautiful.

The way of heaven is to lower the elevated and raise the depressed, to reduce the excessive and augment the insufficient. Rivers and seas are located where there is a lack of earth, and so the world resorts to them and honors them.

Sages are humble and modest, pure and calm, deferential in their speech; this is seeing the lowly. They are open-minded and unpossessive; this is seeing the lacking. Because they see the lowly, they can reach the heights; because they see the lacking, they can attain goodness and wisdom.

The proud do not succeed, the extravagant do not last; the powerful die, those who fill their days perish. A gusty wind or a violent storm does not last all day, a ravine cannot be filled in an instant. Gusty winds and violent storms act forcefully, so they cannot last long before they die out. Ravines are in positions of power, so they cannot but be drained.

Therefore sages keep to the feminine and get rid of extravagance and arrogance; they do not dare to act forcefully. Because they keep the feminine, they can establish the masculine; because they do not dare to be extravagant and arrogant, they are able to endure long.



40

Lao-tzu said:

The way of heaven is to revert after reaching a climax, to diminish upon reaching fullness; this is illustrated by the sun and moon. Therefore sages diminish themselves daily and empty their moods, not daring to be self-satisfied; they progress daily by yielding, so their virtue does not fade. This is how the way of heaven is.

It is in the nature of human feelings that everyone likes to be in high positions and dislikes to be in low positions; everyone likes gain and dislikes loss; everyone likes advantage and dislikes affliction; everyone likes honor and dislikes lowliness. Ordinary people strive for this reason and therefore cannot succeed; because they grasp something they cannot master it.

So sages emulate heaven, achieving without striving, attaining without grasping. They have the same senses as other people but are on a different path; therefore they can survive long.

Therefore the ancient kings had a warning device that would stand upright when empty and tip over when full. The point is that when things

reach full flourishing, then they begin to decline; when the sun reaches midsky, it starts to set; when the moon waxes full, it starts to wane; when happiness ends one is sad.

So brilliance and broad knowledge are preserved by ignorance; learning and eloquence are preserved by frugality; martial power and courage are preserved by fear; wealth, status, and greatness are preserved by restriction, benevolence extended to all the world is preserved by deference. These five things are the means by which kings of yore kept the world. Those who take to this path do not want fullness; only by not being full can they use fully and not make anew.

41

Lao-tzu said:

Sages close up together with darkness and open up together with light. Able to reach the point where there is no enjoyment, they find there is nothing they do not enjoy. Since there is nothing they do not enjoy, they reach the pinnacle of enjoyment.

They use the inner to make the external enjoyable and do not use externals to make the inner enjoyable; therefore they have spontaneous enjoyment in themselves and so have their own will, which is esteemed by the world. The reason it is so is that this is essential to the world in the world's own terms.

It is not up to another, but up to oneself; it is not up to anyone but the individual. When the individual attains it, everything is included.

So those who understand the logic of mental functions regard desires, cravings, likes, and dislikes as externals. Therefore nothing delights them, nothing angers them, nothing pleases them, nothing pains them. Everything is mysteriously the same; nothing is wrong, nothing is right.

So there is consistent logic for men and consistent behavior for women: they do not need authority to be noble, they do not need riches to be wealthy, they do not need strength to be powerful; they do not exploit material goods, do not crave social reputation, do not consider high social status to be safe, and do not consider low social status to be dangerous; their body, spirit, energy, and will each abides in its proper place.

The body is the house of life, energy is the basis of life, spirit is the controller of life: if one loses its position, all three are injured. Therefore

when the spirit is in the lead, the body follows it, with beneficial results; when the body is in the lead, the spirit follows it, with harmful results.

Those people who live for gluttony and lust are tripped and blinded by power and profit, seduced and charmed by fame and status, nearly beyond human conception.

When your rank is high in the world, then your vitality and spirit are depleted daily, eventually to become dissipated and not return to the body. If you close up inside and keep them out, they have no way to enter. For this reason there are sometimes problems with absentmindedness and work being forgotten.

When the vitality, spirit, will, and energy are calm, they fill you day by day and make you strong. When they are hyperactive, they are depleted day by day, making you old.

Therefore sages keep nurturing their spirit, make their energy gentle, make their bodies normal, and bob with the Way. In this way they keep company with the evolution of all things and respond to the changes in all events.

42

Lao-tzu said:

Those who are known as real people are united in essence with the Way, so they have endowments yet appear to have none; they are full yet appear to be empty. They govern the inside, not the outside. Clear and pure, utterly plain, they do not contrive artificialities but return to simplicity.

Comprehending the fundamental, embracing the spirit, thereby they roam the root of heaven and earth, wander beyond the dust and dirt, and travel to work at noninvolvement. Mechanical intelligence does not burden their minds; they watch what is not temporal and are not moved by things.

Seeing the evolution of events, they keep to the source. Their attention is focused internally, and they understand calamity and fortune in the context of unity. They sit unconscious of doing anything, they walk unconscious of going anywhere.

They know without learning, see without looking, succeed without striving, discern without comparing. They respond to feeling, act when pressed, and go when there is no choice, like the shining of light, like the casting of a shadow. They take the Way as their guide; when there is any

opposition they remain empty and open, clear and calm, and then it disappears.

They consider a thousand lives as one evolution, they regard ten thousand differences as of one source. They have vitality but do not exploit it; they have spirit but do not make it labor. They keep to the simplicity of wholeness and stand in the center of the quintessential.

Their sleep is dreamless, their knowledge is traceless, their action is formless, their stillness is bodiless. When they are present, it is as if they were absent; they are alive but are as if dead. They can appear and disappear instantaneously and employ ghosts and spirits.

The capabilities of vitality and spirit elevate them to the Way, causing vitality and spirit to expand to their fullest effectiveness without losing the source. Day and night, without a gap, they are like spring to living beings. This is harmonizing and producing the seasons in the heart.

So the physical body may pass away, but the spirit does not change. Use the unchanging to respond to changes, and there is never any limit. What changes returns to formlessness, while what does not change lives together with the universe.

So what gives birth to life is not itself born; what it gives birth to is what is born. What produces change does not itself change; what it changes is what changes. This is where real people roam, the path of pure quintessence.

43

Lao-tzu said:

The Way is so high there is nothing above it, so deep there is nothing below it.

It is evener than a level, straighter than a plumb line, rounder than a compass, squarer than a ruler.

It contains the universe but has no outside or inside; it is hollow like an overturned bowl and has no obstruction.

Therefore those who embody the Way do not become angry or overjoyed. When they sit they are not cogitating, when they sleep they do not dream. They name things when they see them and respond to events as they come up.

44

Lao-tzu said:

Those who wish to command a reputation inevitably create causes, and when causes are created they abandon the public and take to the private. Turning their backs on the Way, they take things upon themselves; they do good when they see they will be praised for it, setting themselves up as worthies.

Under these conditions, government does not accord with reason, and business does not accord with the time. When government does not accord with reason, there is much blame; when business does not accord with the time, there is no success.

When arbitrary actions are intended to hit the mark, even success is not enough to prevent blame. When business fails, that is enough to destroy a person.

45

Lao-tzu said:

Noncontrivance means mastering the strategy of noncontrivance, looking after uncontrived affairs, and employing uncontrived wisdom.

The master hides in formlessness, acts without laziness, does not initiate prosperity or start misfortune.

Beginning in formlessness, acting when there is no choice, if you want good fortune, first let there be no calamity; if you want what is beneficial, first remove what is harmful.

So those who are at peace by noncontrivance are endangered when they lose that whereby they are at peace. Those who are orderly by noncontrivance fall into chaos when they lose that whereby they are orderly. Therefore they do not want to be lustrous like jewels or plentiful like stones.

Animals with fine markings are stripped of their hides; those with beautiful horns are killed. Sweet springs are used up, straight trees are cut down. Flowery talk is later resented, mountains are torn up when their rocks contain jade. The troubles of the people already exist before words are spoken.

46

Lao-tzu said:

The actions of a time go along with its motive forces; for those who do not know the Way, fortune is calamity.

The sky its roof, the earth its car, those who use the Way well never come to an end.

The earth its car, the sky its roof, those who use the Way well live out their lives free from harm.

As the phases of life are set forth, there must be supersession; all that the sky covers is in accord.

Therefore, I have said, “Knowing unconsciously is best; presuming to know what you don’t know is sick.”

47

Lao-tzu said:

When mountains produce gold and stones produce jade, they are stripped apart. When trees sustain the lives of insects, they are themselves eaten. When people make up things to run, they wind up robbing themselves.

The fact is that people who like running things never fail to be affected by them; those who compete for profit are inevitably exhausted.

When good swimmers drown and good riders fall, in each case they have brought disaster on themselves by what they like.

Gain is a matter of the time, not a matter of competition; order is in the Way, not in the ruler.

Earth is below and does not struggle for height, so it is secure and not dangerous. Water flows downward and does not struggle for speed, so it is not slow.

Therefore sages grasp nothing and so lose nothing, contrive nothing and so fail at nothing.

48

Lao-tzu said:

One word is inexhaustible, two words are a source for the world; three words are best for the lords, four words are mate of the world.

“Faithfulness” is inexhaustible.

“[the] Way [and] Virtue” are a source for the world.

“Promoting [the] wise [and] virtuous” are best for the lords.

“Disliking exclusivism [and] loving everyone” are mate of the world.

49

Lao-tzu said:

There are three kinds of death that are not natural passing away.

If you drink and eat immoderately and treat the body carelessly and cheaply, then illnesses will kill you.

If you are endlessly greedy and ambitious, then penalties will kill you.

If you allow small groups to infringe upon the rights of large masses and allow the weak to be oppressed by the strong, then weapons will kill you.

50

Lao-tzu said:

Fine are the rewards of the generous, profound the calamities of the bitter. Those who give little but expect much accumulate bitterness and cannot but have trouble. Observe how they go, and you know how they come.

51

Lao-tzu said:

Find out destiny, govern mental functions, make preferences orderly, and suit real nature; then the way of government is comprehended.

Find out destiny, and you won’t be confused by calamity or fortune. Govern mental functions, and you won’t be joyful or angry at random. Make preferences orderly, and you won’t crave what is useless. Suit real nature, and your desires will not be immoderate.

When you are not confused by calamity or fortune, then you accord with reason in action and repose. When you are not joyful or angry at random, then you do not flatter people in hopes of reward or fear of punishment. When you do not crave what is useless, you do not hurt your nature by greed. When your desires are not immoderate, then you nurture life and know contentment.

These four things are not sought from without and do not depend on another. They are attained by turning back to oneself.

 52

Lao-tzu said:

Don’t pursue actions that can be repudiated, but don’t resent it if people repudiate you. Cultivate virtues worthy of praise, but don’t expect people to praise you.

You cannot cause calamity not to occur; but trust in yourself not to beckon it. You cannot cause fortune to arrive; but trust in yourself not to reject it. When calamity occurs, since it is not your doing you do not grieve when in straits. When fortune comes, since it is not your achievement you are not conceited when successful.

In this way you live at ease and enjoy effortlessness, yet there is order.

 53

Lao-tzu said:

The Way is to preserve what you already have, not to seek what you haven’t got. If you seek what you haven’t got, then what you have is lost; if you go along with what you have, then what you want will come.

Those who try to govern without order having been stabilized in a state free from chaos are in danger; those who seek fame without their behavior having been accepted as faultless will be hurt.

Therefore no fortune is greater than having no trouble, no profit is greater than having no loss. So people may lose by gaining and may gain by losing.

The Way cannot encourage those who take to profiteering, but it can be used to stabilize the spirit and avoid harm. So one savors having no troubles rather than savor having prosperity; one savors having no crime rather than savor having merit.

The Way says, “In darkness follow the authority of Nature and share the same energy with Nature; you’ll have no thoughts or worries, keep no excessive surplus. You do not welcome what comes or cling to what goes; though people may be of the east, west, south, or north, you stand alone in the middle.”

In this way you avoid losing your honesty even when you are in the midst of dishonest people; you flow along with the world yet do not leave

your domain. You do not contrive to be good and do not try to avoid embarrassment. Following the Way of Nature, you do not deliberately initiate anything and do not focus exclusively on yourself. Going along with the design of Nature, you do not plan ahead yet do not waste time or neglect opportunities. Placing your hopes on Nature, you do not seek to gain yet do not refuse good fortune. Following the laws of Nature, inwardly there is no unwarranted fortune and outwardly there is no unwarranted misfortune, so calamity and fortune do not arise. How can people steal from you?

Therefore words of ultimate virtue are on the same road, works of ultimate virtue have the same blessing. When above and below are of one mind, there are no branching byways, and those who look elsewhere are tuned out in delusion. Open up a way for them to be good, and people will turn toward the right direction.

54

Lao-tzu said:

When you do good, you are encouraged; when you do ill, you are watched. Encouragement produces demands, watching produces trouble.

Therefore the Way cannot be used to go forth in quest of fame, but it can be used to withdraw for self-cultivation.

Therefore sages do not seek renown for their acts and do not seek praise for their knowledge. Their management follows nature spontaneously, without them adding anything themselves.

There is something that is not accomplished by those who contrive, something that is not attained by those who seek. People get exhausted, and the Way does not come through to them.

To have knowledge but do nothing has the same merit as having no knowledge. To have ability but not exploit it has the same virtue as having no ability. If you have knowledge but seem to have none, have ability but seem to have none, the design of the Way succeeds and human talent disappears.

Personality and the Way are not both illustrious at the same time: if people are in love with reputation, they do not use the Way; when the Way overcomes personality, then fame stops. When the Way stops and display is made of personality and fame, then there is danger and destruction.

55

Lao-tzu said:

To have trustworthy men distribute goods does not compare to determining portions and drawing lots. Why? Because the attitude of the concerned toward fairness is not comparable to that of those who are not concerned.

To have honest men guard goods does not compare to shutting the doors and locking up completely, because the attitude of the desirous toward honesty is not comparable to that of those who have no desire.

If you mention people's flaws, they resent it; if they see their own ugliness in a mirror, they think it's all right. If people can deal with others and not be concerned with themselves, they avoid being burdened.

56

Lao-tzu said:

Those who serve people either use money or humble words. Money comes to an end, but desire is never satiated.

Those who associate with humble attitudes, undemanding words, and logical talk do not have to make promises or pledges. Those who bind formal agreements break them in no time at all.

Therefore ideal people do not put on an outward show of humanity and justice, but inwardly they cultivate the virtues of the Way.

They cultivate the things in their domains, throughout the breadth of their province, urging the people to protect themselves to the death and fortify their city walls. With above and below of one mind, together they protect the land and its produce.

Then those who work for the people do not attack the innocent, those who work for profit do not go after those in difficulty. This is the way to certain wholeness, the principle of certain profit.

57

Lao-tzu said:

Sages do not overcome their minds, ordinary people do not overcome their desires. Ideal people act in a sane frame of mind, petty people act out perverse moods.

A sane frame of mind is when you have an inward facility for access to essence while outwardly acting according with justice and following reason, not being tied up in things.

Perverse moods are progressive search for richer taste, wanton indulgence in sound and form, fits of elation and rage, heedlessness of negative aftereffects.

Sanity and perversity hurt each other, desire and essence harm each other. They cannot stand together; when one rises, the other passes away. Therefore sages reduce desire to follow essence.

The eye likes form and color, the ear likes sound, the nose likes fragrance, the mouth likes flavor. All together, there is always benefit and harm associated with them.

As for habitual desires, the ears, eyes, nose, and mouth do not know what to want; in each case it is the mind that controls this, each in its place. From this perspective, it is clear that desire cannot be overcome.

58

Lao-tzu said:

To govern the body and nurture essence, sleep and rest moderately, eat and drink appropriately; harmonize emotions, simplify activities. Those who are inwardly attentive to the self attain this and are immune to perverse energies.

Those who decorate their exteriors harm themselves inside. Those who foster their feelings hurt their spirit. Those who show their embellishments hide their reality.

Those who never forget to be smart for even a second inevitably burden their essential nature. Those who never forget to put on appearances even on a walk of a hundred steps inevitably burden their physical bodies.

Therefore, beauty of feather harms the skeleton, profuse foliage on the branches hurts the root. No one in the world can have excellence in both.

59

Lao-tzu said:

When there is light in the sky, one does not worry about darkness among the people; when there is wealth in the earth, one does not worry about poverty among the people. The Way of perfect virtue is immovable as a

mountain; those who travel on it take this as their aim. It is enough for oneself and suffices others. It is not granted by any human, and those who use it do not receive a reward for it; therefore they are at peace and can last.

The universe does not give and therefore does not take away: it does not reward and therefore does not resent. Those who are accustomed to anger inevitably have a lot of resentment, those who are good at giving are inevitably good at taking. Only by following the naturalness of the universe can one master its design.

Therefore when praise appears, then censure follows along; when good appears, then evil comes along. Profit is the beginning of harm, fortune is the forerunner of misfortune. If you do not seek advantages, you will come to no harm; if you do not seek fortune, you will have no misfortune. For the body, completeness is normalcy; riches and status are temporary conditions.

60

Lao-tzu said:

Sages have no strange clothes or weird behavioral patterns. Their clothes are not incongruous, their behavior is unnoticeable. They are not ostentatious when successful and not fearful when destitute. They do not show off when famous, and they are not ashamed to be unknown. They are different but not strange. All of them use what cannot be named; this is called great mastery.

61

Lao-tzu said.

The Way is to straighten oneself and await the direction of destiny. When a time is going to arrive, you cannot go out to greet it and bring it to you; when a time is going to leave, you cannot stop it and pull it back. Therefore sages are neither ambitious nor retiring.

I went along with the time for three years; when the time was gone, I left; when I had been gone for three years, the time was there and I followed. When I was neither rejecting anything nor becoming attached to anything, I stood in the right place in the middle.

The Way of Heaven has no familiars; it only associates with virtue. When the attainment of fortune is not one’s own ambition, one is not proud of one’s achievements. When the occurrence of calamities is not of one’s own

making, one does not regret one's actions. When the inner mind is calm and quiet, it does not burden its powers.

If one is not startled when dogs howl, one is confident of the truthfulness of one's condition, with nothing out of place. Therefore those who realize the Way are not confused, those who know destiny are not worried.

When emperors die, their corpses are buried in the fields, but they are commemorated in the ceremonial hall of light; this shows that the spirit is more precious than the body. Therefore when the spirit controls it, the body obeys; when the body overcomes it, the spirit is exhausted. Although intellectual brilliance may be used, it must be returned to the spirit; this is called great mastery.

62

Lao-tzu said:

People in ancient times who sustained themselves took pleasure in virtue and did not mind lowliness, so reputation could not affect their will. They took pleasure in the Way and did not mind poverty, so profit could not move their minds. Therefore they were sober yet capable of enjoyment, quiet and able to be serene.

To use a finite lifetime to worry and grieve over the chaos of the world is like weeping into a river to increase its water in fear of its drying up. Those who do not worry about the chaos of the world but enjoy order in their own bodies can be engaged in conversation about the Way.

63

Lao-tzu said:

People have three resentments. Those whose status is high are envied by others. Those whose offices are important are hated by the rulers. Those whose income is large are resented by others.

So the higher the status, the humbler one should be; the greater the office, the more careful one should be; and the larger the income, the more generous one should be. Those who exercise these three things are not resented.

Therefore nobility is based on lowliness, elevation is founded on humility.

64

Lao-tzu said:

Speaking is a means of expressing oneself to others, hearing is a means of understanding others in oneself. People who are blind and deaf do not experience this, so there are things they do not know. But blindness and deafness are not only physical conditions; the mind also has these handicaps. No one knows how to get through; this is like being blind and deaf.

Here is how the Way is the source: all that has form is born therein, so as a parent it is close; the energy of food all has its life therein, so as a ruler it is generous indeed; all knowledge is learned from it, so as a teacher it is brilliant indeed.

People all harm what is useful by what is useless; that is why their knowledge is narrow and their days are not enough. If they would use their leisure days to inquire into the Way, their hearing and seeing would deepen.

Not listening and not inquiring is like being blind and deaf in the company of others.

65

Lao-tzu said:

Small people pursue undertakings on the premise of profit, exemplary people pursue undertakings on the premise of justice. Doing good is not for reputation, but reputation follows it. Reputation does not anticipate profit, but profit winds up there. What is sought may be the same, but the ultimate end is different. So it happens that loss follows when there is gain.

Those whose words are not consistently true and whose behavior is not consistently appropriate are small people. Those who are perceptive in a single matter and expert in one skill are middling people. Those who have everything and use their abilities in a measured way are sages.

66

Lao-tzu said:

Life is what we temporarily depend upon; death is where we ultimately return. Therefore when the world is orderly one protects oneself by justice, and when the world is disorderly one protects justice by oneself. The day of

death is the end of the journey. So exemplary people are careful about unity, only using this.

So life is what is received from the universe, destiny is what is met in one's time. If one has the talent but doesn't live in the appropriate time, that is Nature. There may be a way to seek something, but whether one gets it is a matter of fate. Ideal people can do good, but they cannot necessarily reap its blessings. They are unwilling to do wrong, but they cannot necessarily avoid troubles.

Therefore ideal people go forward when they encounter the right time; they succeed justly, so there is no luck associated with it. If the time is not right, they withdraw; they defer courteously, so there is nothing unfortunate in it.

Therefore those who are not regretful even though they be poor and lowly have found what they value.

67

Lao-tzu said:

Human feelings are such that people submit to virtue rather than force.

Virtue is in what you give, not in what you get. Therefore when sages want to be valued by others, first they value others; when they want to be respected by others, first they respect others. When they want to overcome others, first they overcome themselves; when they want to humble others, first they humble themselves. So they are both noble and lowly, using the Way to adjust and control this.

The sage kings of ancient times spoke humbly to others and placed themselves after others. This is why the world gladly promoted them and did not tire of them, supported them without considering it a burden. Their virtue was abundant and their dispositions were harmonious.

So if you know how giving becomes taking and deference becomes precedence, then you are close to the Way.

68

Lao-tzu said:

Those who have little virtue but are much favored are objects of criticism, those who have little talent but are in high positions are in peril,

those who have not accomplished much but receive rich salaries are weak. So people may lose by gain and may gain by loss.

Everyone knows the profit of profit but not the sickness of sickness. Only sages know how sickness can be profitable and profit can be sickening. That is why a tree that fruits doubly will have damaged roots, and a family with much in storage will have bad luck later on. The fact that great profit turns into harm is the Way of Nature.

69

Lao-tzu said:

People have harmonious and rebellious dispositions that are born in the mind. When the mind is orderly, the disposition is harmonious; when the mind is disorderly, the disposition is rebellious.

The question of whether the mind is orderly or disorderly is a matter of the virtue of the Way. If you realize the Way, then the mind is orderly; lose the Way, and the mind is disorderly.

When the mind is orderly, social relations are deferential. When the mind is disorderly, social relations are contentious. With deference, there is virtue; contention produces robbery. With virtue, the disposition is harmonious; when robbery occurs, the disposition becomes rebellious.

When the disposition is harmonious, one sacrifices oneself to serve others. When the disposition is rebellious, one sacrifices others to serve oneself. These two dispositions can only be controlled by the Way.

The Way of Nature is like an echo responding to a sound: when virtue accumulates, then fortune arises; when ills accumulate, then resentment arises.

Public service is ruined by the proliferation of bureaucracy, devotion to parents declines with wives and children, troubles arise from resolution of worries, illnesses get worse after temporary improvement. So if you are as careful of the end as of the beginning, then nothing will be spoiled.

70

Lao-tzu said:

To get an army of ten thousand men is not as good as hearing a single fitting word. To get a precious pearl is not as good as finding where things

come from. To get a valuable jewel is not as good as finding where things fit.

Even if a land is large, if it is militaristic it will perish. Even if a nation is secure, if it is warlike it is in peril. Therefore a small country with few people may have weapons but not use them.

71

Lao-tzu said:

Those who can become rulers are conquerors. Those capable of conquering opponents are necessarily the strong. The strong are those who use the power of others. Those who can use the power of others are those who win people's hearts. Those who can win others' hearts are always people who are at peace with themselves. Those who are at peace with themselves are flexible and yielding.

Those who can beat their inferiors get locked in struggle when they meet their equals. The deeds of those who win over their equals by yielding are unfathomable. So they can amass nonvictories into great victory.

72

When Wen-tzu asked about the Way, Lao-tzu said:

If you don't study sincerely, you won't listen to the Way deeply. Listening is to convey wisdom, to foster action, and to bring achievement and honor. If it is not sincere, it is not clear, not deep, not effective; so the highest learning involves listening with the spirit, middling learning involves listening with the mind, lower learning involves listening with the ear.

The learning of those who listen with their ears is in the surface of their skin. The learning of those who listen with their minds is in their flesh and muscles. The learning of those who listen with their spirits is in their bones and marrow.

So when you do not listen deeply to something, you do not know it clearly; when you do not know it clearly, then you cannot plumb its essence, and when you cannot plumb its essence you cannot perfect its practice.

The general principles for listening are to empty the mind so that it is clear and calm: discount moods and don't be full of them, have no thoughts

and no rumination. Let the eyes not look at random, let the ears not listen at random. Concentrate the vitality of the mind so that it builds up and the inner attention is fully consolidated. Once you have attained this, you must stabilize and preserve it, and must extend and perpetuate it.

The original production of the Way has a beginning. It begins in weakness and develops into strength, begins in slightness and develops into greatness. A gigantic tree begins as a sprout, a huge building starts at the bottom. This is the Way of Nature. Sages emulate this, lowering themselves with humility, withdrawing to put themselves last, minimizing themselves by frugality, and lessening themselves by detachment. Being lowly, they are honored; withdrawing, they precede; being frugal, they are broad; by being lesser they become great. This is accomplished by the Way of Nature.

The Way is the basis of virtue, the root of heaven, the door of fortune. All beings depend on it for life, growth, and stability. The Way has no artifice and no form: inwardly it can be used to cultivate oneself, outwardly it can be used to govern humanity. When it is achieved in practice and established in fact, we are neighbors of Heaven. It is not contrived, but there is nothing it does not do; no one knows its state, no one knows its reality, but there is truth in it.

When emperors have the Way, all in their domains are obedient to them, and they maintain the land and its productivity for a long time. When local rulers have the Way, their people live happily together, and they do not lose their states. When the gentry and the masses have the Way, they preserve themselves and protect their parents. When the strong and great have the Way, they are victorious without warring When the small and the weak have the Way, they are successful without contending.

When undertakings have the Way, their completion results in good fortune. When rulers and ministers have the Way, they are faithful and benevolent. When parents and children have the Way, they are kind and devoted. When gentry and peasantry have the Way, they love one another.

So with the Way there is harmony, without the Way there is cruelty. From this point of view, the Way is beneficial to people in everything. If the Way is practiced a little bit, a little bit of good fortune is obtained. If the Way is practiced to a greater extent, more good fortune is obtained. If the Way were practiced to the fullest possible extent, the whole world would follow it, absorb it, and take it to heart.

Therefore emperors are those to whom everyone in the land resorts, kings are those to whom everyone in the land goes. If everyone in the land does not resort to them and does not go to them, they cannot be called emperors or kings. Therefore emperors and kings cannot be established without people. And even if they win people, if they lose the Way they cannot keep them.

Examples of losing the Way are extravagance, indulgence, complacency, pride, attention to the extraneous, self-display, self-glorification, competitiveness, forcefulness, making trouble, forming grudges, becoming commanders of armies, and becoming leaders of rebellions. When small people do these things, they personally suffer great calamities. When great people do these things, their countries perish.

At best it affects the individual, in worse cases it affects generations to come; no crime is greater than lacking the Way, no bitterness is deeper than lacking virtue. Such is the Way of Nature.

73

Lao-tzu said:

When you go on the Way, it makes other people unable to wound you no matter how boldly they stab, unable to hit you no matter how skillfully they strike.

Indeed, to be immune to stabbing and striking is still an embarrassment; it is not as good as causing people not to dare to stab you no matter how bold they are, not to dare to strike you no matter how clever they are.

Now not daring does not mean there is no such intention, so it is even better to cause people not to have the intent.

Those who have no such intention do not have a mind that loves to help or harm. That is not as good as causing all the men and women in the world to joyfully wish to love and help you. If you can do that, then you are a sovereign even if you have no land, you are a chief even if you have no office; everyone will wish for your security and welfare.

Therefore courage in daring kills, courage in not daring enlivens.

74

When Wen-tzu asked about Virtue, Lao-tzu said:

Develop it, nurture it, foster it, mature it. Universal benefit without discrimination is one with heaven and earth; this is called virtue.

When Wen-tzu asked about humaneness, Lao-tzu said:

If you are in a superior position, don't be proud of your success; if you are in a subordinate position, don't be ashamed of your problems. If you are wealthy, don't be arrogant; if you are poor, don't steal. Always keep impartial universal love and do not let it fade. This is called humaneness.

When Wen-tzu asked about justice, Lao-tzu said:

If you are in a superior position, you help the weak; if you are in a subordinate position, you maintain control over yourself. Don't indulge in your whims when you are successful, and don't get excitable when you are in straits. Follow reason uniformly, without bending it subjectively. This is called justice.

When Wen-tzu asked about courtesy, Lao-tzu said:

In a superior position, be respectful yet dignified; in a subordinate position, be humble yet serious. Be deferential and yielding, act as the female to the world. Take your stand on not presuming, establish your facilities on not mastering. This is called courtesy.

Lao-tzu continued: Therefore if you practice that virtue, then your subordinates will follow orders. If you practice that humaneness, then your subordinates will not be contentious. If you practice that justice, then your subordinates will be fair and upright. If you practice that courtesy, then your subordinates will honor and respect you. When these four things are practiced, the country is secure and peaceful.

Therefore what gives people life is the Way, what matures them is virtue; what makes them love is humaneness, what makes them upright is justice, and what makes them serious is courtesy. Without development and nurturing, you cannot foster growth. Without kindness and love, you cannot complete maturation. Without uprightness and correctness, you cannot preserve and extend. Without respect and care, you cannot value worth.

So virtue is valued by the people, humaneness is taken to heart by the people, justice is held in awe by the people, courtesy is respected by the people. These four things are marks of civilization, means whereby sages govern the multitudes.

If leaders have no virtue, commoners will be resentful. If leaders have no humaneness, commoners will fight. If leaders have no justice, commoners will be violent. If leaders have no courtesy, commoners will be disorderly.

When the four constants are not established, this is called lacking the Way. To lack the Way but not perish is something that has never happened.

75

Lao-tzu said:

In a society of perfect virtue, merchants make their markets convenient, farmers enjoy their fields, officials are secure in their jobs, independent scholars practice their ways, and people in general enjoy their work. Thus wind and rain are not destructive, plants and trees do not die off early, and the celestial design is made manifest.

When a society degenerates, taxes are immoderate and executions never cease; critics are punished and virtuous men are killed. Thus mountains crumble, rivers dry up, insects wriggle without rest, the fields have no plants.

So when a society is orderly, a fool cannot disturb it alone, when a society is chaotic, a sage cannot govern it alone. For wise people, good humor and serenity are life, perfect virtue and traveling the Way are destiny. So life can be carried out only after meeting destiny, while destiny can be understood only when the time comes. There must be such an age before there are such people.

76

When Wen-tzu asked him about sagehood and wisdom, Lao-tzu said:

To know by hearing is sagehood, to know by seeing is wisdom. Therefore sages always hear where calamity and fortune arise in order to choose their paths; the wise always see how calamity and fortune take shape in order to choose their acts.

Sages know what is auspicious and inauspicious to the Way of Nature, so they know where calamity and fortune arise. The wise foresee their taking shape, so they know the gateways of calamity and fortune.

Hearing what has not yet taken place is sagehood; seeing ahead what will take shape is wisdom. Those without hearing or seeing are ignorant and confused.

77

Lao-tzu said:

When leaders like justice, they believe in the time and take it upon themselves; they give up prognostication and use wisdom.

Beings are many, knowledge is shallow. It is impossible to treat the many adequately by means of the shallow; those who rely on their own knowledge alone inevitably miss a lot.

Intellectualism eventually runs out of tricks, adventurism is a path to danger and destruction. Compulsive largess leads to lack of proportion; and if the portions of those above are not fixed, the ambitions of those below have no end.

To exact many taxes makes enemies of the people, but if little is taken and much given, there is not enough to go around. Therefore compulsive largess is a way to bring on enmity.

Seen from this point of view, material goods are not enough to rely upon; the arts of the Way must be based on understanding.

78

Wen-tzu asked: Ancient kings presided over the land by means of the Way; how did they do this?

Lao-tzu said: They held to unity, without contrivance, taking heaven and earth as the basis and evolving along with them.

Great instruments of the world cannot be grasped, cannot be contrived. Contrivance spoils them, grasping loses them.

Holding to unity is seeing the small; by seeing the small, they were able to achieve the great. Noncontrivance is keeping still; by keeping still they were able to make the world right.

They lived in the midst of great fulfillment yet were not extravagant; they were in high and noble positions yet were not arrogant. Because they were not extravagant in greatness, they were full and did not wane; because they were not arrogant in leadership, they were exalted without being imperiled. Being full without waning is how they preserved wealth; being high in rank without peril is how they preserved nobility. Wealth and nobility did not leave them, and their endowment reached their descendants; the ancient royal way was complete in this.

79

Lao-tzu said:

For the people to have a path that they travel in common and a norm that they observe in common, duty cannot stabilize them and authority cannot compel them, so they set up leaders to unify them. When leaders hold unity, there is order; without constancy, there is disorder.

The Way of leadership is not a reason for contrivance but for noncontrivance. When intellectuals do not make virtue into a business, the courageous do not use their strength for violence, and humanitarians do not use their position for favors, this can be called unity.

Unity is a path without opposition, the basis of all beings. If leaders repeatedly change laws, nations repeatedly change leaders, and people use their positions to enforce their likes and dislikes, then subordinates will fear they cannot manage their responsibilities.

So when leaders lose unity, the resulting disorder is worse than having no leaders. Leadership must hold unity before they can form communities.



80

Wen-tzu asked: How many ways of kingship are there?

Lao-tzu replied: Only one.

Wen-tzu said: In ancient times there were those who reigned by means of the Way, and there were those who reigned by means of arms. How can there be only one way?

Lao-tzu answered: To reign by means of the Way is a matter of virtue, and to reign by means of arms is also a matter of virtue. There are five kinds of military operations: military operations motivated by justice, response, anger, greed, and pride.

To execute the violent so as to rescue the weak is called justice. To mobilize only when it becomes unavoidable because of the aggression of enemies is called response. To contend for petty reasons and lack control over the mind is called anger. To take advantage of others' land and desire others' wealth is called greed. To be proud of the size of the country and vastness of the population, and to wish to look smart to rival countries, is called pride.

Military action based on justice results in leadership. Military action based on response results in victory. Military action based on anger results

in defeat. Military action based on greed results in death. Military action based on pride results in extinction. This is the Way of Nature.

81

Lao-tzu said:

Those who let go of the Way and trust in intelligence are in peril; those who neglect calculation in favor of talent are thwarted. So keep to your lot and follow reason, and you won't be grieved by loss or overjoyed by gain.

Success is not something you have contrived, gain is not something you have sought. What comes in is accepted without taking it, what goes out is given without bestowing it.

When life is granted as it is by springtime, and life is taken away as it is by autumn, so that those who are granted life are not grateful and those who are killed are not resentful, this is near the Way.

82

Wen-tzu asked: How do rulers get to be liked?

Lao-tzu said: By being like a river, which is flavorless but endlessly useful, starting out small and later becoming large.

Those who wish to be above others should lower themselves to them in their speech; those who wish to precede others should follow them. Then the world will emulate their love and promote their humaneness and justice, so there will be no cruelty.

Although they are on top, the people do not consider them a burden; although they are in the lead, the masses do not attack them. The world gladly promotes them and does not tire of them. Even in other countries with different customs, everyone loves them. They can go anywhere successfully, so they are valued by the world.

83

Lao-tzu said:

To cling to the laws of one generation and thereby repudiate customs transmitted through the ages is like trying to tune a lute with the movable tuning bridge glued down. Sages adapt to the changes of the times, taking appropriate measures on seeing how things form.

Different ages have different concerns; when times change, customs change. Laws are set up in consideration of the age, works are undertaken according to the time.

The laws and measures of ancient rulers were dissimilar, not because they purposely contradicted one another, but because the tasks of their times were different. Therefore they did not take established laws for rules, but took for their rules the reasons why laws were laws, progressively changing along with the development of civilization.

The laws of sages can be observed, but their reasons for making laws cannot be found out; their words can be heard, but their reasons for speaking cannot be formulated.

The wise rulers of high antiquity considered the world light and all things small. They considered death and life equal and considered developments and changes the same.

Embracing the Way, they promoted sincerity, thus to mirror the feelings of all beings. Above they consorted with the Way, and below they evolved as humans.

If we want to learn their way now and keep their laws and administer their political order without attaining their pure clarity and profound sagacity, it will be impossible to achieve order thereby.

84

When Wen-tzu asked him about government, Lao-tzu said:

Guide by the Way, nurture with virtue. Do not make a display of wits, do not exert pressure. Be minimal and hold to unity, handling nothing considered profitable and displaying nothing considered desirable. Be upright and honest, but without causing hurt or harm. Have no conceit or pride.

Guide them by the Way, and the people will be loyal; nurture them with virtue, and the people will obey. Don’t make a display of wits, and the people will be content; don’t exert pressure, and the people will be simple. Not to make a display of wits is restraint. Not to exert pressure is not being presumptuous.

Gather people by humility, win them by generosity; preserve yourself by restraint, and do not dare to be complacent. If you are not humble, people will become estranged and alienated. If you do not nurture them, the people

will be rebellious. If you make a display of wits, the people will be contentious. If you exert pressure, the people will be resentful.

When the people are estranged and alienated, the strength of the nation wanes. When the people rebel, the leadership has no authority. When people are contentious, they easily do wrong. When those below resent those above, then rank is dangerous.

When these four things are sincerely cultivated, the right Way is near.

85

Lao-tzu said:

Higher words are put to lower uses, lower words are put to higher uses. Higher words are for normal use, lower words are for strategic use.

Only sages are effectively able to know strategy, so their words prove truthful and their expectations prove accurate.

The loftiest behavior in the world puts honesty and trustworthiness above personal bonds, but who can value it?

So when sages discuss the crooked and straight in events, they contract and expand along with them and do not have a fixed outward manner.

When you pray you utter taboo names, if you are drowning you will grab onto anyone, because the force and momentum of events makes you that way.

Strategy is the way sages see independently. If there is opposition at first but later accord, that is called strategy. If there is first accord but later opposition, that signals ignorance of strategy.

For those ignorant of strategy, good turns into bad.

86

Wen-tzu asked: The master says that without the Way and virtue there is no means of governing the world, but kings of former ages who inherited established works included those who lacked the Way yet finished out their times without having suffered calamity or defeat. How does this come about?

Lao-tzu said: From emperors on down to common people, all have their own lives; but their livelihoods differ in richness. Sometimes the world may have destruction of countries and breaking up of homes; it is because of lack of the Way and virtue.

When the Way and virtue are present, there is vigilance and diligence, a constant alert for danger and destruction. When the Way and virtue are absent, there is indulgence and sloth, so destruction can come at any time.

If ancient tyrants had followed the Way and practiced virtue, those who overthrew them would not have succeeded, no matter how good they were.

The Way and virtue are means of mutual life-giving and nurturing, means of mutual developing and maturing, means of mutual closeness and loving, means of mutual respect and honor.

Even the ignorant do not harm those they love. If you could truly have all people in the world embosom a heart of human love, where would calamity come from?

As for those who lack the Way yet do not experience disastrous harm, their humanity is not yet ended and their sense of justice is not yet extinct.

But even if kings without the Way are not entirely devoid of a sense of humanity and justice, the lords are contemptuous of them. When the lords are contemptuous of the king, the court is not respectful and even if it gives directions they are not followed.

When humanity is totally gone and justice is extinct, the lords rebel, and the rabble govern by power. The strong domineer over the weak, the large intrude upon the small. When the citizenry makes aggression its job, disasters occur and chaos ensues With destruction imminent how can it be expected that there will be no calamity?

87

Lao-tzu said:

When laws are intricate and punishments severe, then the people become devious. When those above have many interests, those below do a lot of posturing. When much is sought, little is gained. When prohibitions are many, little gets done.

To let concerns produce concerns, and then take concern to stop concerns, is like brandishing fire and trying not to burn anything. To let knowledge produce troubles, and then use knowledge to prepare against them, is like stirring water in hopes of making it clear.

88

Lao-tzu said:

When rulers like benevolence, people are rewarded without having achieved anything of worth, and people are allowed to go free even if they have committed crimes. When rulers like punishment, worthy people are neglected and innocent people are charged.

If the rulers have no likes or dislikes, they are not resented for executions or blessed for charity. They follow standard guidelines without personal involvement in affairs, like sky and earth, covering and supporting all.

To unite and harmonize people is leadership; what singles out for punishment is law. When people therefore accept punishment without resentment, this is called the virtue of the Way.

89

Lao-tzu said:

There are no fixed judgments of right and wrong in the world. People each judge as right whatever they consider pleasant and judge as wrong whatever they consider unpleasant. Thus the search for right is not search for truth, but search for those who agree with oneself; it is not a departure from wrong, but a departure from those who disagree with one's feelings and ideas.

Now if I want to choose what is right and abide by it, and pick out what is wrong to depart from it, I do not know what society calls right and wrong.

So govern a large country like cooking small fry; don't stir, that's all.

Those who aim for accord are increasingly liked as their words hit the mark; those who are personally aloof are viewed with suspicion as their strategies hit the mark. Now if I want to be correct myself in my dealings with others, how do I know from what perspectives society looks at me? If I join in the customary race, that is like trying to run away from the rain; wherever you go you get wet.

If you want to be in emptiness, then you cannot be empty. When you do not contrive emptiness but are spontaneously empty, this is what is desired, and it brings everything. So communion with the Way is like the axle of a carriage, which does not move itself yet enables the carriage to travel thousands of miles, turning in an inexhaustible basis.

So when sages embody the Way, they revert to changelessness in order to deal with change; they act, yet without contrivance.

90

Lao-tzu said:

When it fights repeated wars and wins repeated victories, a country will perish. When it fights repeated wars, the people are wearied; when it wins repeated victories, the rulership becomes haughty. Let a haughty rulership employ a weary people, and few countries would not perish.

When rulers are haughty, they become indulgent, and when they become indulgent they use things up. When people are weary they become resentful, and when they become resentful they reach the end of their wits. When rulers and ruled have both gone to such extremes, destruction is inevitable.

Therefore it is the Way of Nature to retire when one's work is successfully accomplished.

91

King P'ing asked Wen-tzu: I have heard that you got the Way from Lao Tan. Wise people now may have the Way, yet they are in a decadent and confused era. How could it be possible to civilize a long unruly people by means of the strategy of one person?

Wen-tzu said: The virtue of the Way corrects what has gone wrong and makes it right, brings order to chaos, transforms decadence and corruption into simplicity and purity.

When virtue is reborn, the world is at peace. The pivot is in the leader, who is the guide of the people. Those above are models for those below. What those above like, those below will consume. If those above have the virtue of the Way, those below will have humanity and justice. When those below have humanity and justice, there are no decadent and chaotic societies.

Accumulating virtue results in kingship, accumulating resentment results in destruction. An accumulation of rocks makes a mountain, an accumulation of water makes a sea. Nothing can be made without accumulation.

Heaven gives to those who accumulate the virtue of the Way; earth helps them, ghosts and spirits assist them, phoenixes hover over their gardens, unicorns roam in their fields, dragons lodge in their ponds.

So to preside over the land by means of the Way is a blessing to the land; to preside over the land without the Way is detrimental to the land. If an individual makes an enemy of the whole land and yet wants to continue indefinitely, it will be impossible to do so.

This is why good kings flourished and wicked kings perished.

92

Lao-tzu said:

The ruler is the heart of the nation. When the heart is well, the whole body is comfortable; when the heart is anxious, the whole body is disturbed.

Therefore when your body is well, your limbs forget each other; when a country is well, the ruler and ministers forget each other.

93

Lao-tzu said:

A ringing chime ruins itself giving sound, a tallow candle burns itself out giving light. The patterns on tigers and leopards bring hunters, the quickness of monkeys brings trappers.

Thus brave warriors die because of their strength, intellectuals are stymied because of their knowledge; they are able to use knowledge to know, but they are unable to use knowledge not to know.

So those who are bold in one capacity or perceptive in one mode of expression can participate in biased discussion but not in universal response.

94

Lao-tzu said:

The substance of the Way is nonbeing: you cannot see its form when you look at it, you cannot hear its sound when you listen for it. This is called the mysterious unknown. The “mysterious unknown” is a way of talking about the Way, it is not the Way itself.

The Way is gazing inward and returning to oneself. Therefore when people do not have small awareness, they do not have great delusion; when they do not have small wisdom, they do not have great folly.

No one uses flowing water for a mirror; still water is used for a mirror. By keeping thus inwardly, you become still and are not scattered outwardly.

When the moon is facing the sun it loses its light; yin cannot take on yang. When the sun comes out, the stars are invisible; they cannot compete with its light. Outgrowths cannot be stronger than the basis, branches cannot be larger than the trunk. When the top is heavy and the bottom light, it will easily overturn.

One abyss does not have two dragons, one female does not have two males. When there is one, there is stability; with two, there is contention. When the jade is in the mountains, the plants and trees are verdant; when the pearls grow in the depths, the riverbanks do not wither.

Earthworms do not have the strength of sinews and bones, or the sharpness of claws and fangs, yet they eat of the mountains above and drink of underground springs below, because they are single-minded.

The clarity resulting from purity is such that you can see the pupils of your eyes in a cup of water; the disturbance of murkiness is such that you cannot even see a mountain in the water of a river.

An orchid does not lose its fragrance just because no one smells it, a boat does not sink just because no one rides in it, and an exemplary person does not stop practicing the Way just because no one is aware of it: that is how they are by nature.

To put the pure into the polluted is demeaning; to put the polluted into the pure is upsetting. If there are two energies in the sky, they form rainbows; if there are two energies in the earth, its resources leach out; if there are two energies in people, they become ill.

Yin and yang cannot be permanent; it is winter for a time, and summer for a time. The moon does not know the day, the sun does not know the night.

When the river is wide, its fish are big; when the mountain is high, its trees are tall; when the land is broad, its qualities are rich. Therefore fish cannot be hooked without bait, beasts cannot be lured to empty traps.

When there are fierce animals in the mountains, because of them the trees are not cut; when there are stinging insects in a garden, because of them the flowers are not picked; when there are wise ministers in a nation, they ward off enemies for a thousand miles.

Those who attain the Way are like the axles of carriages turning in their hubs, not moving themselves yet conveying the carriages for a thousand

miles, revolving endlessly in an inexhaustible source.

So if you elect the crooked to assist the honest, there is no getting anywhere; if you elect the honest to assist the crooked, they will not go along.

When you stretch out a net where birds are going to fly by, what catches a bird is just one eye of the net, but if you make a net with just one eye you will never catch a bird.

So events may be impossible to foresee, things may be impossible to predict. Therefore sages nurture the Way and await the time.

Those who wish to catch fish first dig a channel; those who wish to lure birds first plant trees. When water has accumulated, fish gather; when the trees flourish, birds gather. Those who intend to catch fish do not dive into the depths, those who intend to catch monkeys do not climb up into the trees; they just let them have what suits them.

The space where the feet are stepping is slight, and so you need untrod ground to walk farther; what the mind knows is narrow, and so you need the unknown to gain understanding.

If the rivers dry up, the valleys are empty; if the hills are leveled, the pools are filled up. If the lips are retracted, the teeth get cold; when river water is deep, the soil remains in the mountains.

When water is still, it is clear; when clear, it is even; when even, it is flat; and when it is flat, you can see the forms of things in it. Because the forms cannot be merged, they can be considered veritable images.

What causes leaves to fall is the wind shaking them; what causes water to be turbid is something disturbing it. A vessel of jade rings is the achievement of the grindstone; the cut of a sharp sword is the power of the whetstone. An insect on a swift horse travels a thousand miles without flying; it carries no provisions, yet does not get hungry.

When the hares have all been caught, the hunting dogs are cooked; when the high-flying birds are all gone, the mighty bow is put away. To retire when one’s work is accomplished honorably is the Way of Nature.

Anger emerges from nonanger, action emerges from inaction. Look at nonexistence, and you apprehend what can be seen; listen to silence, and you apprehend what can be heard.

Flying birds return to their homeland, rabbits on the run go back to their lairs. When foxes die, they rest their heads on their home mounds; when

insects are cold, they take to the trees. In each case, they rely on what gives them life.

Water and fire are incompatible, but when there is a cauldron between them, then they can be used to blend flavors; close relatives love each other, but when slanderers come between them, then even fathers and sons are dangerous to each other.

An animal raised to be eaten will feed from any vessel; the more it fattens its body, the closer it is to death. A phoenix soars a mile high, so no one can get at it.

A pestle remains firm through a hundred poundings, but it cannot strike itself; the eyes can see farther than a hundred paces, but they cannot see one's own heart.

Make a mountain on the heights, and it will be safe and not perilous; make a pool in a depression, and it will be deep, so fish and turtles resort to it. Canals and ponds overflow in a rainstorm and dry up in a drought; but the source of the rivers and seas is so deep that it is never exhausted.

Turtles have no ears, but their eyes cannot be covered, so they are precise in seeing; the blind have no eyes, but their ears cannot be covered, so they are precise in hearing.

Murky water is turbid; it can be used to wash one's feet. Pure water is clear; it can be used to wash one's tassels. Raw silk may be made into a hat, or it may be made into socks. When it is a hat, you hold it up with your head; when it is socks, you walk on it with your feet.

The power of metal overcomes wood, but a single blade cannot cut down a whole forest. The power of earth overcomes water, but a handful of dirt cannot dam a river. The power of water overcomes fire, but a cup of water cannot put out a carload of kindling.

In winter there is lightning, in summer there is hail; but cold and heat do not change their seasons. Frost and snow may pile up, but when the sun comes out they flow.

What is tilted is easily overturned, what is leaning is easy to push over. When something is almost done, it is easy to help; when the climate is humid, it readily rains.

It is because they are fragrant that orchids do not get to see the frost. Insects crushed in the fifth month for ointment flee an army; their life is in the full moon of May.

When vitality leaks out, it is easy to be destroyed inside. Produce that is not in season is not to be eaten.

Which wears down first, the tongue or the teeth? Which is straightened first, a rope or an arrow?

What makes the shadow curved is the form; what makes the echo unclear is the sound. Those with the same illness as others who have died cannot be cured even by a good doctor; those on the same course as nations that have perished cannot be saved even by loyal planners.

If you have a musician puff on a flute while having a craftsman finger the holes, even if they keep in time they cannot make it sure, because there is no director giving it shape.

Someone walking in a forest cannot go in a straight path; someone going along a defile cannot tread a beeline.

An ocean is vast because it takes in what it puts out. There is no second sun; a vixen does not have two males; spiritual dragons do not have companions; ferocious beasts do not herd; birds of prey do not go in pairs.

A parasol without the cane does not shade you from the sun, a wheel without spokes does not roll; but the cane and the spokes are not enough to depend on. When you draw a bow and shoot, the arrow cannot fly without the bow-string; but the propulsion of the arrow is only a tenth part of shooting.

Hungry horses in their stables are quiet, but toss in some hay beside them and contention arises. No one can fill a three-inch pipe if it is not stopped, but if a need is met by ten times ten measures, a hundred measures is enough.

Cut along the line, and you don’t go too far; weigh on a balance, and you don’t go wrong. Pointing out ancient laws for analogies, let enforcement be carried out if and when appropriate, and let punishments be executed if and when appropriate. To carry them out when they are right is called decisiveness; to carry them out when they are wrong is called disorder.

Farmers toil, rulers live off it. Fools speak, the wise choose. When you see things clearly, you can put them in the appropriate places, as you would jewels and stones. When you see things dimly, you must keep a plan.

The light of a hundred stars is not like the light of one moon. Ten windows all the way open do not give the light of one door.

Snakes are not suited to having legs, tigers are not suited to having wings. Now suppose there is a couch here six feet long; to get across its

length lying down is not hard even for the clumsy, but to jump across its length from a stand is not easy even for the skillful. This is because of the difference in the position and execution.

Those who assist at a ceremony get rewarded, those who help out in a fight get hurt. Those who take shelter under unlucky trees get hit by lightning.

The sun and moon ought to be bright, but floating clouds block them; river water ought to be clear, but silt muddies it; wild orchids ought to live long, but the autumn wind kills them; human nature ought to be calm, but cravings harm it. If you are in a cloud of dust and don’t want to be blinded, that cannot get it to clear.

Yellow gold and tortoise shell are considered trinkets by the intelligent; soil covering the ground is considered wealth by the able. Therefore to give gold and jade to the weak is not as good as giving a foot of plain silk.

The hub of a wheel is empty and stands in the center, each of the thirty spokes exerts its strength to the full. If you have an axle only and not the spokes, how can you get anywhere?

Citrus fruits have their homelands, reeds have their thickets. Animals with the same feet roam along with each other, birds of a feather fly together.

If you want to observe the lands of the nine states without traveling thousands of miles, or you have no source of policy and education and yet want to be at the head of a multitude of people, you will have a hard time.

The fierce get caught, the high-flying get shot. Therefore great purity appears ignominious, broad virtue seems inadequate.

When a gentleman has too much to drink, a lowly person strikes the jug; if it is not to be liked, at least it can be used to evoke shame. People naturally prefer to wear cotton clothing, but if someone is shooting at them they will put on armor; they find what is suitable because of what does not suit them.

Thirty spokes in one rim each fits into one slot and only one, like workers each keeping to their own jobs. When people are skillfully employed, they are like legs of a centipede, which are numerous yet do not interfere with one another; they are like tongue and teeth, soft and hard rubbing against each other without hurting.

Stones are hard by nature, flowers are fragrant by nature. What you have in youth becomes increasingly evident as you grow.

Supporting and upholding, refusing and deferring, gaining and losing, acquiescing and refusing—these are a thousand miles apart.

Second growth does not fruit; if flowers are too early, they fall even if there is no frost. The sweat is on the nose, but the powder is put on the brow.

When there’s a rotting rat under the steps, it stinks up the house. Go into the water, and you’ll get wet; look for fragrance while carrying something foul, and you won’t succeed no matter how clever you are.

In winter, ice can be chopped up; in summer, wood can be tied in knots. The right time is hard to find and easy to lose. When the trees are in full flourishing, you can pick from them all day and they still produce more; but let the autumn wind deposit frost, and they will wither in one night.

When a target is set out, arrows are shot at it; when a woods is luxuriant, axes are taken to it. It is not that they beckon it, but it happens as a result of

the situation. A nursing dog will bite a tiger, a sitting hen will grab a weasel; bolstered by their feelings, they do not assess their strength.

A person who would only rescue someone from drowning for a profit would certainly drown someone for profit. A boat can float, but it can also sink. Fools do not know to be content with enough.

If a good steed does not go forward when urged on, and does not stop when pulled back, a real leader will not seek to go anywhere on it.

Even if water is even, it will always have ripples. Even if a scale is correct, it will always have a margin of error. Even if measurements are equal, there will always be some slant. Without compass and ruler, one cannot establish circle and square; without the plumb line, one cannot be sure of the straight and the curved. Those who use the compass and ruler also have the heart of the compass and ruler.

No matter how high a mountain is, you cannot see it with your back turned; no matter how tiny a hair is, you can see it if you look at it. Although there is fire in wood and bamboo, it doesn't give heat unless they are drilled; although there is water in earth, it doesn't come out unless you dig.

Swift as an arrow is, it won't go more than a couple hundred yards. If it goes step by step without stopping, even a lame tortoise can go a mile. Keep on piling up baskets of earth, and hills and mountains will eventually form.

If you are at a river's edge and want some fish, you'd better go home and weave a net. A bow must be tuned before it can be expected to be powerful; a horse must be trained before it can be expected to be a good steed; people must be trusted before they can be expected to exercise their abilities.

Even a good smith cannot melt wood; even a good carpenter cannot cut ice. When nothing can be done about something, enlightened people do not concern themselves with it.

It is possible to get people not to cross a river, but it is not possible to get a river not to have waves. If no one says it's all right, the jar is not lowered into the well.

Those who criticize your actions want you to associate with them; those who criticize your goods want you to sell them to them.

Making one move at chess is not enough to show your knowledge; plucking one string of a harp is not enough to produce a feeling of melancholy.

Now if you pick up a single piece of burning coal, it will blister your fingers because of the closeness; but if you are far enough away from a ton of burning coal, you won't die: the energy is the same, but the quantity is different.

When there is glorious flourishing, there is inevitably sadness and wasting away. When the upper classes wear silk, the lower classes wear hemp. When a tree is large, its roots extend in all directions; when a mountain is high, its base supports it.



95

Lao-tzu said:

A drum does not conceal sound, so it can have sound; a mirror does not obliterate form, so it can have form. Chimes have sound, but they do not ring unless they move; wind instruments have music, but they do not make any sound unless someone blows into them. Therefore sages are concealed within and do not make any pitch for others; when things come up they manage them, and when people come to them they respond.

The activity of Nature does not cease; coming to an end, it starts over again. Therefore it can go on perpetually. When a wheel has a place to turn, it can thereby travel far. The activity of Nature is one, without deviation; therefore it has no error.

When the energy of heaven descends and the energy of earth ascends, yin and yang commune and myriad beings are equal. When enlightened people are in charge of affairs, petty people disappear; this is the Way of heaven and earth.

If the energy of heaven does not descend and the energy of earth does not ascend, then yin and yang do not commune and myriad beings do not flourish. Petty people gain power and enlightened people disappear; the five grains do not produce, and the virtue of the Way is inwardly concealed.

The way of heaven is to reduce what is much to add to what is little; the way of earth is to decrease what is high to augment what is low. The way of ghosts and spirits is to make the excessive haughty and give to the humble. The way of humanity is not to give to those who have much. The way of sages is humility that no one can overmaster.

When the sky is light and the sun is bright, then it can illumine the four quarters. When the rulers are illumined and the ministers are enlightened,

the land is then at peace. When a land has these four kinds of light, then it can last a long time. Light means illumination of civilization.

The way of heaven is a pattern, the way of earth is a design; unity harmonizes them, time works for them, thereby developing myriad beings. This is called the Way.

The Great Way is even, and not far from oneself. Cultivate it in yourself, and that virtue is real. Cultivate it in others, and that virtue is endless.

Heaven covers myriad beings, distributing its blessings to nurture them. It gives and does not take, so the vital spirit returns to it. Giving without taking is higher virtue.

Therefore in the endowment of virtue there is no height higher than heaven, and no depth lower than a marsh. Heaven is high, marshes are low; sages take this as a model, whereby the noble and the base have order, and the land is settled.

Earth supports myriad beings and matures them. It gives and takes, so the bones return to it. Giving and taking is lower virtue. Lower virtue is not mindless of virtue, so it has no virtue.

Earth is stable because it receives from heaven. With the earth stable, myriad beings form. With the earth broad, myriad beings gather. Being stable, it supports all; being broad, it accommodates all. With the formation of the earth deep and thick, water springs enter into it and collect. With the extent of the earth wide and vast, it can last forever. Sages take this as a model, whereby virtue accommodates all.

When negative energy is blocked by positive energy, all beings flourish; when positive energy returns from negative energy, all beings are at peace. When beings flourish, all thrive; when beings are at peace, all are happy. When beings are happy, they are orderly.

When negativity injures beings, positivity is naturally constrained. When negativity advances and positivity recedes, petty people gain power and enlightened people flee harm. The Way of Nature is thus.

When positive energy is active, myriad beings are relaxed and find their places. Therefore sages follow the way of positivity.

Those who go along with others find that others go along with them; those who oppose others find that others oppose them. Therefore the true nature of beings is not lost.

When the ponds and lakes are full, myriad beings develop regularly; when the ponds and lakes dry up, myriad beings pass away like flowers. If

the rains do not come, the land is devastated.

Positive energy rises and then descends, so it is the master of myriad beings. It does not exist forever, so it can end and then begin again, and thus can continue perpetually. Because it can continue perpetually, it is the mother of the world.

Positive energy can be disbursed only after it has accumulated; negative energy can exert influence only after it has built up. Nothing can exert influence without having been accumulated and built up. Therefore sages are careful about what they accumulate.

When positivity erases negativity, all beings are robust. When negativity erases positivity, all beings decline. Therefore when leaders esteem the positive way, then beings thrive, when they esteem the negative way, then beings do not develop.

If rulers are not humble to their subjects, the influence of their virtue will not be effective. Therefore when rulers are humble to their subjects they are lucid and clear, and when they are not humble to their subjects they are blind and deaf.

When the sun emerges over the horizon, beings grow; when true leaders preside over the populace, they illumine the virtues of the Way thereby. When the sun goes down below the horizon, beings rest; when petty people preside over the populace, everyone runs and hides.

When thunder stirs, myriad beings open up; when rain falls, myriad beings relax. The activities of great people have some resemblance to this. The movements of yin and yang have constant measures, the actions of great people do not exhaust anyone or anything. When thunder stirs the earth, myriad beings go easy; when wind shakes the trees, plants and trees are damaged. When great people leave evil and take to good, the populace does not move away. Therefore the populace has something to leave and something to take to: they leave extremes and take to what reduces troubles.

If air does not move, fire does not come forth; if great people do not speak, small people have nothing to go on. Fire depends on fuel; the words of great people must have truth. When there is truth and reality, where can one go and not be successful?

When the water of the rivers is deep, soil remains in the mountains; when a hill is high, its base goes down to the depths. When yang energy is full, it turns into yin; when yin energy is full, it turns into yang. Therefore desires

should not be completely fulfilled, pleasures should not be taken to extremes.

When you say nothing vicious in anger and show no sign in wrath, this is called strategic success. Fire flames upward, water flows downward; the Way of sages is sought by similitude: if rulers rely on the positive, the world is in harmony; if rulers rely on the negative, the world sinks and drowns.

96

Lao-tzu said:

Accumulating the thin results in thickness, accumulating the low results in height; exemplary people work hard every day and thereby become illustrious, petty people have fun every day and thereby come to disgrace. Although the process may not be visible, this is the reason for seeing what is good as though one cannot reach it and getting rid of what is bad as one would of misfortune.

If one turns to goodness, there is no resentment even if one goes too far; if one does not turn to goodness, even if loyal one brings on hatred. Therefore resenting others is not as good as resenting oneself; seeking from others is not as good as seeking from oneself. Voices call themselves, types seek themselves, names direct themselves, people govern themselves. Everything is oneself. If you brandish a pointed instrument and get stabbed, or if you wield a blade and get cut, how can you resent others for that? Therefore ideal people are careful about subtleties.

All beings bear yin and embrace yang, with a mellowing energy for harmony. Harmony dwells in the center. Therefore the fruits of trees grow in the heart, the fruits of bushes grow in the pod, eggs and embryos grow in the center. What grows from neither egg nor embryo needs the right time.

When the ground is level, water does not flow; when weights are equal, a balance does not tilt. The birth and development of beings occur as they do through sensitivity.

97

Lao-tzu said:

When mountains are high, clouds and rain form on them; when waters are deep, dragons are born in them; when ideal people reach the Way, the

richness of virtue flows in them. Those who have hidden virtues will surely have manifest rewards; those who do good deeds in secret will surely have illustrious reputations. Those who plant wheat do not harvest millet; those who sow resentment are not repaid with gratitude.

98

Lao-tzu said:

The Way can be used for weakness or for strength, for flexibility or for firmness, for passivity or for activity, for darkness or for light. It can be used to embrace heaven and earth, it can be used to respond to the times without fixed convention.

Knowing it is shallow, not knowing it is deep. Knowing it is external, not knowing it is internal. Knowing it is coarse, not knowing it is fine. Knowing it is not knowing, not knowing is knowing it. Who knows that knowing is not knowing and not knowing is knowing?

The Way cannot be heard; what is heard is not it. The Way cannot be seen; what is seen is not it. The Way cannot be spoken; what is spoken is not it. Who knows that its form is not form? Therefore when everyone knows that good is good, this is not good. Those who know do not say, those who say do not know.

99

Wen-tzu asked: Can people speak of the subtle?

Lao-tzu said: Why not? But only if you know what words mean. Those who know what words mean do not speak with words. Those who struggle for fish get wet, those who chase animals run; it is not that they like it. Therefore ultimate words depart from words, ultimate action departs from action. What people of shallow knowledge compete for is trivial. Words have a source, events have a leader. It is because contrivance has no knowledge that I do not claim to know.

100

Wen-tzu asked: In acting for the sake of a nation, is law also involved?

Lao-tzu said: When people are hauling a cart, they shout, “Heave-ho!” And those in the rear also respond to it. This is a cry for stimulating the

exertion of strength when pulling a cart; no bawdy chantey can compare to it in meaning. In governing a nation, there are conventions, which are not a matter of ornate rhetoric. When laws proliferate ostentatiously, there are many bandits and rebels.

101

Lao-tzu said:

In the Way there is no correct, and yet it can be used for correctness. For example, you need forests for lumber: so lumber is secondary to forest, forest is secondary to clouds and rain, clouds and rain are secondary to negative and positive energies, negative and positive energies are secondary to harmony, harmony is secondary to the Way. The Way is what is called a stateless state, an image with nothing in it, unfathomable; yet by it the world can be molded and transformed.

102

Lao-tzu said:

When sages set up education and execute policies, they must observe the end and the beginning and see the benefits created. When the people know writing, their virtue deteriorates. When they know calculation, their benevolence deteriorates. When they know contracts, their trust deteriorates. When they know machines, their substantiality deteriorates.

A lute does not make any sound, but its twenty-five strings each resound through it; an axle does not turn itself, but the thirty spokes of a wheel revolve by virtue of its power. The strings of a lute must have a balance of relaxation and tautness in order to play a tune. A car needs a balance of work and rest in order to travel far. What enables there to be sound is itself soundless; what makes turning possible does not itself turn.

Rulers and ruled are on different paths; what is easy to govern soon loses order. Those whose rank is high and path is great are followed; those whose work is important but whose path is small are unlucky. Petty virtue spoils justice, petty goodness spoils the Way, petty intellectualism spoils government.

Cruel strictness harms virtue. Great rectitude is not threatening, so the people are easy to lead. Perfect government is easygoing, so the lower

classes do not steal. Perfect loyalty returns to simplicity, so the people have no hypocrisy.

103

Lao-tzu said:

When the law is established to punish whole families or groups for the offenses of one member, then the common people are resentful. When the order goes out to lessen entitlements, then successful ministers rebel.

So those who watch the tracks of the sword and the pen do not know the roots of order and chaos; those who practice the business of setting out battle lines do not know the strategy that wins war in the planning stage.

Sages lead prosperity in the doubly locked inside while considering problems in the doubly dark outside. The ignorant, deluded by small gain, forget about great harm. Therefore there are things that are beneficial in small ways but harmful in important ways, that involve gain in one respect but loss in another respect.

So no humaneness is greater than loving people, no knowledge is greater than knowing people. If there is love for people, no one is punished because of a grudge; with knowledge of people, there are no random policies.

104

Lao-tzu said:

A flood does not last more than three days, a storm does not last more than a day, ending in a while. Those who have developed no virtue yet are unconcerned about it don't get anywhere. Concern is a way to success, delight is a way to loss. Therefore the skillful make weakness into strength and turn calamity into fortune. The Way is unimpeded harmony, and use of it can never be full.

105

Lao-tzu said:

Clear serenity and joyous harmony are the human essence; standards and guidelines are regulators of affairs. When you know the human essence, you develop yourself spontaneously without violating it; when you know how to regulate affairs, then your actions will not be chaotic.

To give out one directive that disperses endlessly, unifying all through one organ—this is called heart. To see the root and thereby know the branches, hold to the one and thereby respond to the manifold—this is called art. To know the reason why you are living where you are, to know where you are going when you are going somewhere, to know what means you are depending on when you work, and to know where to stop when you act—this is called the Way.

What makes others laud and praise you as high-minded and wise is mental power. What makes others despise you and repudiate you is mental error. When words have issued from the mouth, they cannot be withheld from others. Actions that were initiated close at hand cannot be prevented from reaching afar.

Works are hard to accomplish and easily foiled; fame is hard to establish and easily outdated. Ordinary people all make light of small injuries and slight subtle things, until they get to be big problems. When disaster comes, it is people themselves who have produced it. When fortune comes, it is people themselves who perfect it.

Calamity and fortune come through the same gate, gain and loss are from the same neighborhood. Unless one is completely clear, one cannot distinguish them. Knowledge and thought are the door of calamity and fortune, activity and stillness are the pivot of gain and loss. It is imperative to watch carefully.

106

Lao-tzu said:

People all know the workings of order and chaos, but none of them know the means of preserving life whole. Therefore sages discuss society and work for it; they assess what they do and plan for it.

Sages can be passive, and they can be active; they can be flexible, and they can be firm; they can be yielding, and they can be forceful. Active or passive according to the time, they establish works according to resources.

Seeing how things go, they know how they will wind up. They work for the whole but observe its transformations: when there is change, they adopt forms for it; and when there is movement, they respond to it. By this means, carrying this out all their lives, they are not thwarted by anything.

So there are things that are all right to talk about but not to do, and there are things that are all right to do but not to talk about. There are things that are easy to do but hard to complete, and there are things that are hard to perfect and easy to ruin.

Something that is all right to do but not talk about is making choices. Something that is all right to talk about but not to do is contriving deception. Something that is easy to do but hard to complete is work. Something that is hard to perfect and easy to ruin is repute. These four things are objects of sages' attention, seen only by the illumined.

107

Lao-tzu said:

The Way involves respect for what is small and subtle, acting without losing the right timing. Redouble your caution even on the hundredth shot, and troubles will not increase. Planning for fortune isn't enough; worrying about calamity is too much.

Of those frosted over on the same day, the ones covered up are unharmed. When the ignorant are equipped, they are as successful as the knowledgeable.

Accumulated love becomes good fortune, accumulated hatred becomes calamity. People all know to help out in trouble, but no one knows how to cause trouble not to arise.

To cause trouble not to arise is easy, to act helpfully in trouble is hard. People today do not strive to cause trouble not to arise, they strive to help out in trouble. Even sages could not devise a plan for them.

There are millions of sources of trouble and calamity, beyond any standard of comparison. Sages live inaccessibly to avoid trouble, calmly and silently awaiting the time.

Petty people who do not know the door of calamity and fortune are apt to fall into trouble when they act; even if they take elaborate precautions, that is not enough to keep them safe.

Therefore the highest knights first avoid trouble and only then pursue advantage after that; they first keep away from disgrace and only then seek a good name after that.

Therefore sages always work on the formless outside and do not keep their minds on the formed inside. In this way calamity and trouble have no

way to get to them, and neither repudiation nor acclaim can stain them.

108

Lao-tzu said:

In the general course of human life, attention should be minute, while aspiration should be great; knowledge should be round, while action should be straight; abilities should be many, while concerns should be few.

Minuteness of attention means considering problems before they arise, guarding against calamity by being careful about small and subtle things, not daring to indulge in your desires.

Greatness of aspiration means to embrace myriad nations and unite different ways of life in an egalitarian way, being a hub at the center of a collection of judgments of right and wrong.

Roundness of knowledge means it has no beginning or end but flows far in all directions, springing inexhaustibly from a profound source.

Straightness of action means to stand upright unshakably, to remain pure and unstained, to keep self-control when in straits, and to refrain from self-indulgence when successful.

To have many abilities means to be competent in both culture and defense, and to do precisely what is right in terms of your conduct in action and repose, in what you take up and what you put aside, what you dispense with and what you set up.

To have few concerns means to grasp what is essential in order to comprehend the manifold, to hold to the minimum in order to govern the maximum, to live quietly in order to sustain activity.

So those who exercise minute attention control in subtlety, those whose aspiration is great take all to heart, those with round knowledge know everything, those of straight action do everything, those with many abilities master everything, and those whose concerns are few minimize what they hold.

Therefore the attitude of sages toward good is that none is too minor to do; and their attitude toward error is that none is too minor to correct. They do not use fortunetellers to inform their actions, yet ghosts and sprites dare not go ahead; this can be called most valuable. Nevertheless they are intensely wary and on the alert, daily being careful with every single day. This is how they attain spontaneous unity.

The knowledge of small people is of course little, and yet the things that they do are many. Therefore their undertakings eventually die out. Therefore it is easy to improve the trend of events with correct education, and it inevitably succeeds, whereas it is hard to improve the trend of events with erroneous education, and it inevitably fails. To abandon what is easy and sure to succeed, and take up what is hard and certain to fail, is the doing of ignorance and confusion.

109

Lao-tzu said:

The beginnings of fortune are subtle, the origins of calamity are confused. The determining factors of calamity and fortune are so subtle as to be imperceptible. Sages see their beginnings and ends, so they should be observed without fail.

The rewards and punishments dealt out by enlightened rulers are not for what people have done for the rulers themselves, but for what they have done for the country. To those who please the rulers themselves but do not do anything for the country, they do not give rewards; on those who offend the rulers themselves but are useful to the country, they do not visit punishments.

Therefore when justice and duty rest on what is appropriate, one who embodies this is called an exemplary person. Those who neglect appropriate justice and duty are called small people.

Penetrating knowledge attains without toil. The next grade works but does not ail. The lower ones are both ailing and toiling.

People of old were sensitive but not possessive; people today are possessive but not sensitive. When an ancient tyrant had chopsticks made of ivory, a noble man lamented; when the aristocrats of Lu were being buried with statues, the scholar Confucius heaved a sigh. Seeing where it had started, they knew where it would end up.

110

Lao-tzu said:

Benevolence is something people admire, duty is something that people esteem. When those whom people admire and esteem lose their lives and their countries, it is because they did not comprehend the times. So those

who know benevolence and duty but do not know strategy appropriate to the time do not attain the Way.

The Five Lords of high antiquity valued virtue. The Three August Chieftains of midantiquity practiced justice. The Five Hegemons of late antiquity employed power. Now to take the Way of the lords and try to apply it to a time of hegemons would not be the Way.

Therefore good and bad are the same in the sense that repudiation and praise depend on conventional trends; actions are equal in the sense that opposition and harmony depend on the time.

When you know what Nature does and know how people act, then you have the means to get through the world. If you know Nature but do not know people, then you have no way to interact with society. If you know people but do not know Nature, you have no means to travel along the Way.

If you direct your intent straight at what is comfortable, then the adamant and powerful will rob you; if you use your body to work for things, then yin and yang will devour you.

People who have attained the Way change outwardly but do not change inwardly. Outward change is the means by which they know other people; inwardly not changing is the means by which they preserve themselves.

Therefore if you have stable inner control while able to contract and expand outwardly, moving along with things, then you can avoid failure in all your undertakings.

What is esteemed on the Way is the capacity to change. If you keep to a single discipline and carry out a single activity, even if you attain fulfillment thereby, that is still no different from blocking the great Way by clinging to a small preference.

The Way is silent, because it is empty; it does not involve acting on others and does not involve acting on oneself. Therefore when you follow the Way in undertaking something, it is not the doing of the Way, it is the application of the Way.

What is enclosed by heaven and earth, illumined by sun and moon, warmed by yin and yang, moistened by rain and dew, and supported by the Way and virtue, is all the same one harmony.

Therefore those who can bear heaven can walk on the earth; those who mirror absolute purity see great clarity. Those who establish great peace live in a vast abode; those who can roam in the deepest darkness have the same light as the sun and moon, having no form and yet producing forms.

Therefore real people rest their hopes on the basis of awareness, and make their abode at the beginning of things. They look into the deepest darkness and listen to the silence. In the midst of deepest darkness alone they find light; in the midst of utter silence alone they find illumination. Their use of them is not using; only after not using are they able to use them. Their knowledge of them is not knowing; only after not knowing are they able to know them.

The Way is what beings follow, virtue is what life supports. Humaneness is a proof of accumulated charity, justice is what is close to the heart and accords with what is appropriate for the community. When the Way disappears, virtue arises; when virtue declines, humaneness and justice come into being. Therefore people of high antiquity went by the Way and not virtue; people of midantiquity kept virtue but not sentiment; while people of later times were cautious and careful lest they lose humaneness and justice.

So it is that without justice superior people have no way to live; if they lose justice, they lose that whereby they are living. Without profit, small people have no way to make a living; if they lose profit, they lose their livelihood. Therefore superior people fear the loss of justice, while small people fear the loss of profit. Observe what they fear, and you can see the difference between what is calamitous and what is fortunate for them.

111

Lao-tzu said:

Things that are intended to be of benefit may in fact be harmful, while those that are intended to cause harm may in fact be beneficial.

To eat hot food when suffering from humidity and to drink something cold when suffering from thirst are common dietary habits, but expert physicians consider them unhealthy.

Whatever is pleasing to the eyes or pleasing to the emotions is considered profitable by the ignorant but is avoided by masters of the Way.

Sages raise objections first, then cooperate afterwards; ordinary people cooperate first, then raise objections later.

So it is imperative to examine the gateways of calamity and fortune, the reversals of profit and harm.

112

Lao-tzu said:

Those who are successful without being humane or just are mistrusted, while those who have erred but are humane and just are trusted. Therefore humaneness and justice are constant norms for affairs, honored by the world.

Even if strategy is appropriately calculated, with concern for the relief of distress and plans for the survival of the nation, if the affair is prosecuted without humanity and justice, it cannot succeed.

Even if advice is not appropriate for policy and plans do not benefit the country, if the intention is in the national interest and accords with humanity and justice, one will survive.

Therefore it is said, “If a hundred counsels and a hundred plans never hit the mark, it is better to give up one’s course of action and look into humanity and justice.”

113

Lao-tzu said:

When education derives from people with the qualities of leadership, ordinary people are enriched by it. When profit derives from ordinary people, the leadership benefits from their success. Have leaders and ordinary people each achieve what is appropriate for them, and their common success will be easy to nourish, so the Way is attained.

When people have many desires, that injures justice. When they have many anxieties, that harms wisdom. Therefore an orderly country enjoys things conducive to survival, while a cruel country enjoys things that lead to destruction.

Water that flows downward becomes deep and wide; rulers who lower themselves to their subjects become perceptive and lucid. When rulers do not fight with their subjects, then the Way of order goes through.

So the rulers are the roots, the subjects are the branches and leaves. Branches and leaves never flourish without good roots.

114

Lao-tzu said:

When loving fathers care for their children, it is not that they seek recompense from them, but that they cannot get them off their minds. When wise leaders nurture their people, it is not to employ them for their own personal uses, but because they cannot do otherwise by nature.

When people count on their power and presume on their merit, they inevitably come to an impasse. If there is contrivance in any way, then there is no connection with grace.

So if you use what the masses like, then you gain the power of the masses. If you promote what the masses enjoy, then you win the hearts of the masses. Thus you know the end when you see the beginning.



115

Lao-tzu said:

Those who gain unjustly and do not give will find themselves visited by troubles. They cannot help others and have no means of helping themselves either. They can be called ignoramuses, no different from cannibal birds who love the children that will eat them.

Therefore to keep on filling is not as good as stopping; a sharpened edge cannot be maintained forever.

The Way exists in virtue, virtue exists in the Way; their evolution is infinite. Yin exists in yang, yang exists in yin; all things are like this and cannot be completely understood.

When fortune comes, the omens are there; when calamity comes, the omens precede. If you see the omens but do not do good, then fortune does not come. If you do good without seeing omens, calamity does not arrive.

Benefit and harm go through the same gate, calamity and fortune are in the same neighborhood: only saints and sages can distinguish them. Therefore it is said, “Calamity is what fortune depends on, fortune is what calamity overrules; who can know their end?”

When people are about to fall ill, first they get a craving for fish and meat; when a country is about to perish, first it rejects the words of faithful ministers. So when an illness is going to be fatal, one cannot treat it medically; when a country is going to perish, one cannot plan for it faithfully.

Cultivate it in yourself, and only then can you govern people; live at home in an orderly and civilized manner, and only then can you transfer it

to official leadership. Therefore it is said, “Cultivate it in yourself, and that virtue is real; cultivate it at home, and that virtue is abundant; cultivate it in the country, and that virtue is rich.”

What sustains the lives of the people is food and clothing. If business provides enough food and clothing to go around, then it is successful; if it does not provide enough food and clothing to go around, then it is unsuccessful. When business is unsuccessful, character does not mature.

Therefore when you go along with the time but do not succeed, that does not change the system; when you conform to the time but do not succeed, that does not change the order. A time will come again; this is called the rule of the Way

Lordly kings enrich their people, despotic kings enrich their lands, nations in danger enrich their bureaucrats. Orderly nations appear to be lacking, lost nations have empty storehouses.

Therefore it is said, “When the rulers don’t exploit them, the people naturally grow rich; when the rulers don’t manipulate them, the people naturally become civilized.”

When you mobilize an army of one hundred thousand, it costs a thousand units of gold per day; there are always bad years after a military expedition. Therefore armaments are instruments of ill omen and are not treasured by cultured people. If you reconcile great enemies in such a way that some enmity inevitably remains, how unskillfully you have done it!

Therefore the ancients did not bring intimates to them by words and did not command those afar by words; but people close to them were happy, and people did come to them from afar.

When you have the same desires as the people, you are in harmony. When you have the same principles as the people, you are secure. When you have the same thoughts as the people, you know them. Those who gain the power of the people grow rich; those who gain the praise of the people become distinguished.

If there is anything in your actions that invites enmity, or anything in your words that brings on trouble, unless someone tells you about it beforehand, people will be whispering about it later.

Bruited about far and wide, words are troublesome. The tongue is where it starts; once you have spoken out inappropriately, a team of horses cannot overtake your words.

In ancient times the Master of the Center said that the sky has five directions, the earth has five elements, music has five notes, things have five flavors, matter has five primary colors, people have five positions. Thus there are twenty-five kinds of people between sky and earth.

The highest are the spiritual people, real people, people of the Way, perfected people, and sages.

Next are people with virtue, wise people, knowing people, good people, and discerning people.

In the middle are fair people, faithful people, trustworthy people, just people, and courteous people.

Next are scholars, craftspeople, foresters, farmers, and merchants.

Lowest are people without individuality, servile people, stupid people, people who are like lumps of meat, and petty people.

The difference between the highest five and the lowest five types is like the difference between humans and oxen or horses.

Sages look with their eyes, listen with their ears, speak with their mouths, and walk with their feet. Real people notice without looking, hear without listening, go along without walking, are fair without speaking.

Therefore the means whereby sages move the world have never been gone through by real people; the means whereby wise people correct the morals of society have never been observed by sages.

What we call the Way has no front or back, no left or right: all things are mysteriously the same, with no right and no wrong.

116

Lao-tzu said:

Pure emptiness is the clarity of the sky, noncontrivance is the norm for government. Get rid of favor, abandon wisdom, exclude ability, reject human duty, eliminate rationalization, throw away sophistry, and prohibit artifice; then the intelligent and the uncouth are equal on the Way.

Be calm, and you will be equanimous; be empty, and you will get through. Perfect virtue is uncontrived, accommodating all things. The path of emptiness and calm is eternal as heaven and earth; its spiritual subtlety fills everywhere yet does not control things.

The twelve months go through their cycle and then begin again. The powers of the elements overcome each other, but their courses depend on

each other. Therefore extreme cold injures beings, but there cannot be no cold; extreme heat injures beings, but there cannot be no heat. Therefore the acceptable and the unacceptable are both acceptable; for this reason there is nothing that is unacceptable to the Great Way.

Acceptability is a matter of logic: if you do not pursue what is acceptable when you see it, and do not flee what is unacceptable when you see it, acceptability and unacceptability are to each other as left to right, as outside to inside.

What is essential in all events must begin from one; time is their order. Never having changed from ancient times to the present, this is called natural principle.

Hold to the great light above, use its illumination below. The Way produces myriad things, governs yin and yang, transforms them into the four seasons, and divides them into the five elements, each finding its place. Coming and going along with time, laws have constants. When it reaches the powerless below, the way of those above does not overturn, and all citizens are of one mind.

The Way of heaven and earth is fulfilled without contrivance, attained without seeking. This is how we know that it is free from artificiality and is beneficial.

117

Lao-tzu said:

The greatest simplicity is formless, the greatest Way is measureless. Thus the sky is round without being set to a compass, the earth is square without being set to a ruler. The word *universe* refers to time and space; the Way is therein, but no one knows its location.

So if people's vision does not see far, you cannot talk to them about something of immense scope; if people's knowledge is not broad, you cannot speak to them about what is finally ultimate.

Those who are imbued with the Way and commune with all beings have no way to deny each other. That is why the laws of enlightened leaders of ancient times were different in their measures yet were at one with each other insofar as they won the hearts of the people.

Now if we are talking about the compass, ruler, square, and plumb line, they are the tools of a skill and not the reason for its being a skill. That is

why the greatest harpist cannot play a complete tune with missing strings, and a single string cannot induce melancholy alone. So stringed instruments are tools for producing a feeling of sadness, and not the reason for its being sadness.

When it comes to the spirit peacefully roaming between the heart and the hands, freeing the mind to depict the spirit, giving voice to its modulations in the notes of the strings, that is something that a father cannot teach his children, and children cannot learn from their father. This is a principle that is not transmitted.

Therefore calm is the ruler of form, and silence is the master of sound.

118

Lao-tzu said:

The Way of heaven and earth is based on virtue; the Way gives them direction, and beings straighten themselves thereby. It is extremely subtle and very much inward: it is not esteemed on account of things, so it does not depend on achievement for establishment, does not consider rank honorable, does not need fame to be distinguished, does not need ritual to be dignified, and does not require armaments to be powerful.

Therefore the Way is established without coercion, enlightenment is perceptive without being invasive. That the Way is established without coercion means that it does not usurp people's abilities; that enlightenment is perceptive without being invasive means that it does not interfere with their undertakings.

Coercion is contrary to virtue and harmful to beings. Therefore since natural phenomena are on the same course but have different patterns, and myriad beings have the same feelings but different forms, the wise do not try to coerce each other and the talented are not beholden to each other. Thus sages establish laws to guide the hearts of the people, inducing them all to be true to themselves; therefore the living have no gratitude and the dying have no resentment.

The universe is not humane; it makes all beings into straw dogs. Sages are not humane; they consider the people as straw dogs. Kindness, compassion, humaneness, and duty constitute a short and narrow path: when those on a narrow path enter into a greater range, they get lost; and when those on a short path travel a farther distance, they get confused. On

the Way of sages one enters into the vastness without getting lost, and travels afar without getting confused. To always be empty and self-contained can be considered its consummation; this is called natural virtue.

119

Lao-tzu said:

Sages cover everything like the sky, bear everything like the earth, and shine on everything like the sun and moon. They bring harmony like yin and yang, and foster development like the four seasons. They embrace all beings without being the same. For them there is nothing old, nothing new, nothing remote, nothing familiar.

So for those who can emulate Nature, the sky does not have just one season, the earth does not have just one material, and people do not have just one task. That is why there are many kinds of work and many types of pursuits.

Thus it is that those who deploy armies may be careless or may be serious, may be greedy or may be modest. These things are contradictory and cannot be unified. The careless want to act out, the serious want to stop; the greedy want to take, the modest are not keen on what is not theirs.

Therefore the brave can be made to advance into battle but cannot be made to hold tight. The serious can be made to keep security but cannot be made to have contempt for an enemy. The greedy can be made to attack and pillage but cannot be made to divide the spoils. The modest can be made to keep to their places but cannot be made to plunder aggressively. The trustworthy can be made to keep their promises but cannot be made to adapt to changes. These five are employed together by sages, used according to their abilities.

Heaven and earth do not embrace just one being, yin and yang do not produce just one species. So it is because an ocean does not refuse water flowing into it that it is so immense; it is because mountain timber does not refuse the curved and twisted that it gets so high. Sages do not refuse even the words of those who carry firewood and thus broaden their reputation.

If you keep to one corner and neglect the myriad aspects of the totality, if you take one thing and discard the rest, then what you attain will be little and what you master will be shallow.

120

Lao-tzu said:

What the sky covers, what the earth supports, what the sun and moon illuminate, is variegated in form and nature, but everything has its place. What makes enjoyment enjoyable can also create sadness, and what makes security secure can also create danger. Therefore when sages govern people, they see to it that people suit their individual natures, are secure in their homes, live where they are comfortable, work at what they can do, manage what they can handle, and give their best. In this way all people are equal, with no way to overshadow each other.

Nothing and no one in the world is valuable or worthless. If they are valued for what is valuable about them, then all things and all beings are valuable. If they are despised for what is worthless about them, then all things and all beings are worthless. Therefore those who do not esteem the words of pandits do not look for fish in trees or dive for birds in ponds.

In ancient times, when the sage-king Yao governed the land, he guided the people in such a way that those who lived by the water fished, those who lived in the forests gathered, those who lived in the valleys herded, and those who lived on high land tilled the soil. Their habitats were suited to their occupations, their occupations were suited to their tools, and their tools were suited to their resources. In the wetlands they wove nets, on the dry ground they plowed fields.

Thus the people were able to use what they had to exchange for what they lacked, using their skills in exchange for what they could not do themselves. Therefore those who rebelled were few, while those who followed were many. It was like the wind blowing in silence; suddenly feeling it, each individual responds, with clarity or cloudiness.

All beings take to what helps them and avoid what harms them. This is how neighboring countries can be so close that the crowing and barking of their chickens and dogs can be heard across the border, but the people have never set foot in the domains of the lords, and their wheel tracks do not continue more than a few hundred miles. This is what happens when people are at peace in their homes.

A chaotic nation seems full, an orderly nation seems empty; a moribund nation seems lacking, a thriving nation seems to have an abundance. To be empty does not mean to have no people; it means that individuals keep to

their work. To be full does not mean to have many people; it means everyone is concerned with trivia. To have an abundance does not mean to have many goods; it means that desires are moderate and undertakings few. To be lacking does not mean to have no money; it means the populace is small and expenditures are great.

Therefore the laws of ancient kings were not inventions but applications; their prohibitions and punishments were not artificial but conservative. This is the Way of higher virtue.

121

Lao-tzu said:

Governing the world by means of the Way is not a matter of changing human nature; it is based on what people have, bringing that to light and developing it. Therefore relying on a basis leads to greatness, artificiality leads to smallness.

In ancient times, those who made channels for water relied on the current of the rivers; those who produced crops adapted to the conditions of the soil; those who went on expeditions followed the desires of the populace. Those who can adapt accordingly have no enemies in all the world.

Things must be natural before human affairs will be orderly. That is why the regulations and laws of ancient kings were based on the nature of the people, acting to moderate and grace it. Without that nature, no one can be forced to follow any teaching; if you have the nature but not the character, you cannot be made to follow a way.

Human nature includes the qualities of kindness and duty, but unless they are guided by sages, they cannot be rightly directed. By prohibiting disruptive conduct based on what people dislike, criminal codes do not have to be threatening in order to be effective.

Accord with their nature, and everyone in the world will obey. If they go against people's nature, laws and regulations may be posted, but they will not be observed.

The virtue of the Way is the root of merit and honor, kept in the hearts of the people. When people keep it in their hearts, merit and honor are established.

Good leaders in ancient times took their example from the rivers and oceans. Rivers and oceans do nothing to become so huge; it is by

hollowness and lowliness that they become so vast. That is why they can last. Being valleys of the world, their qualities are full; because they do nothing, they can take in a hundred rivers. They are able to gain because they do not seek, and they are able to arrive because they do not go.

This is the way to take the whole world without trying. You are rich because you do not elevate yourself, you are enlightened because you do not see yourself, and you last long because you are not proud of yourself. Dwelling in the realm of nonpossessiveness, you can therefore be king of the world; because you do not contend, no one can contend with you. Because you never act as if you were great, therefore you can become great.

Rivers and oceans are near to the Way, so they can last long, joining sky and earth in mutual preservation. If kings and lords practice the Way, their work is successful but they are not proprietary. Because they are not proprietary, they are strong and firm, strong and firm without being violent toward others.

When you are deeply into the Way, your virtue is deep; and when your virtue is deep, then success and honor are eventually achieved. This is called mysterious virtue. It is deep, far-reaching, opposite of ordinary people.

The world has a beginning, but no one knows its design. Only sages know how it happens. It is not masculine or feminine, it is born but does not die. It is produced by heaven and earth, formed by yin and yang, and given birth by myriad beings.

Therefore yin and yang have roundness and squareness, shortness and longness, survival and destruction; the Way gives them direction. Sunken in mystery, with no concern, your state of mind is very subtle and your relation to the Way is very accurate. Death and life are part of the same design, the evolution of myriad things combines into one Way Simplify life and forget death, and where will you not live long?

Detach from things and words, and be careful not to contrive. Keep to the Way with comprehensive close attention, and do not be domineering over anyone. The highest subtlety is formless; at the beginning of heaven and earth, all things were the same in the Way, but they came to differ in form.

Because the highest subtlety has no object, it can be universally caring. Because it is so immense there is nothing outside it, therefore it is a cover for all beings; because it is so fine that there is nothing inside it, therefore it

is precious for all beings. The Way is the means to preserve life, virtue is the means to safeguard the body.

The measure of the supreme Way is to get rid of likes and dislikes and not possess knowledge; thus by easing the intellect and harmonizing the mind, there remains nothing to counteract the Way.

Heaven and earth concentrate into one, divide into two; when they are rejoined, above and below are not lost, yet they combine into one. Then they divide into five, and when recombined must fit compass and ruler.

The Way is so familiar it cannot be estranged, so close it cannot be put at a distance. Those who seek it afar go and then come back.



122

Lao-tzu said:

Lords have names, but no one knows their real condition. Lords value their virtue, kings value their justice, hegemons understand designs.

The Way of sages has no possessiveness toward anything. It is only after the Way narrows that it concedes to knowledge; it is only after virtue is diluted that it concedes to punishment; it is only after perception becomes shallow that it concedes to examination.

When knowledge is allowed to take over, there is disturbance in the mind. When punishment is allowed to take over, there is bitterness between rulers and ruled. When examination is allowed to take over, those below seek improvement to serve those above, thereby becoming corrupt.

Therefore sages evolve according to heaven and earth; thus their virtues cover like heaven and support like earth. They guide the people according to the times, so their livelihood is rich. Enrich their livelihood, and people are orderly; even if there were spiritual sages, why would they change this?

Detach from intellectual knowledge, minimize punishments, and return to clarity and calm; then people will naturally be upright. The leadership of the Way is priestly; it is solemn, mysteriously silent, yet the whole world receives its blessing. It covers one person without being too broad, it covers ten thousand people without being too narrow.

Therefore excessive favor and excessive harshness are both contrary to the Way. Those who do favors give generously, but if they richly reward those who have not achieved anything, and give high ranks to those who

have not done any work, then people who are employed will be lazy in their offices, and those who live at leisure will be quick to advance.

Harshness means arbitrary execution resulting in the death of the innocent. When those who practice the Way are punished, then people who cultivate themselves will not be encouraged to goodness, and evildoers will readily violate the law. Favoritism creates treachery, harshness creates disorder. Treacherous and disorderly mores are the fashions of a moribund nation.

Therefore when a nation executes criminals, it is not that the ruler is angered; and when a court presents awards, the ruler has nothing to do with it. The criminals do not resent the ruler because their punishment fits their crime, and those who are rewarded do not feel indebted to the ruler because it was brought about by their own achievement.

When the punishments and rewards of the people all come from themselves, they do their work without receiving gifts from others. Then the courts are empty and have no affairs, while the fields are clear and free of pollution.

Thus the very greatest leaders are generally only known to exist. The Royal Way is to manage uncontrived business and carry out wordless instruction, clear, calm, and unperturbed. It is unified and unshakable, delegating authority to subordinates according to the flow of events, monitoring achievements without toiling. Plans are not miscalculated, undertakings are not excessive, words are not embellished, actions are not formalized for show.

Proceeding and withdrawing accord with the time, activity and passivity follow reason. There is no liking or disliking involved in distinguishing beauty from ugliness, no delight or anger involved in reward and punishment. Names indicate themselves, categories construe themselves, events come about spontaneously; nothing comes from the ego. If you want to narrow this down, that is to depart from it; if you want to embellish it, that is to pillage it.

The heavenly energy makes the higher soul, the earthly energy makes the lower soul; return them to recondite subtlety, so that each abides in its abode, and watch over them so as not to lose them. Above there is a continuity with universal oneness, and the vitality of universal oneness connects with heaven.

The Way of heaven is silent; it has no appearance, no pattern. It is so vast that its limit cannot be reached; it is so deep that it cannot be fathomed. It is always evolving along with people, but knowledge cannot grasp it. It turns like a wheel, beginninglessly and endlessly, effective as a spirit. Open and empty, it goes along with the flow, always coming afterward and never in the forefront.

Its way of sensitive government is to open the mind and weaken ambition, to purify awareness and not be ignorant. This is what gets people to cooperate to make progress together, with everyone contributing the best of their own abilities, whatever they may be. The leaders gain the means to regulate administrators, and the administrators gain the means to implement the tasks of leadership, this is how an orderly country is enlightened.

123

Lao-tzu said:

Those who are knowledgeable and like to learn become sages. Those who are brave and like to learn attain victory. Those who ride on the knowledge of the masses delegate everything; those who employ the power of the masses overcome everything. Those who employ the power of the masses do not need individual strongmen; for those who ride on the momentum of the masses, it is no trouble to take over the world.

Do not do anything without calculated planning; if the power and momentum of a movement or trend do not follow reasonable measures, even spiritual sages cannot achieve success thereby.

Therefore when sages initiate undertakings, they are always based on available resources, which they put to use. Those who are effective in one way are placed in one position; those who have one talent work on one task. When you have the strength for the responsibility, an undertaking is not burdensome; when you have the ability for a task, it is not difficult to perform. Because sages employ them all, people are not abandoned and things are not wasted.

124

Lao-tzu said:

Nondoing does not mean that you cannot be induced to come and cannot be pushed away, do not respond when pressed and do not act when moved,

keep stopped and do not flow, clench tight and do not let go. It means that private ambitions do not enter public ways, and habitual desires do not block true science.

It means undertaking projects in accord with reason, establishing works according to resources, fostering the momentum of nature itself, so deception cannot enter in. When undertakings are completed there is no personal conceit, and when success is established, no one claims the honor.

On water, you use a boat; on the beach, you use sand shoes. Over mud, you use skids; in the mountains, you use snowshoes. You make hills on high ground and ponds on low ground. These are not personal contrivances.

Sages are not ashamed of being lowly, but they dislike it when the Way is not practiced. They do not worry whether their own lives will be short, they worry about the hardships of the common people. Therefore they are always empty and uncontrived, embracing the elemental and seeing the basic, not getting mixed up in things.

125

Lao-tzu said:

In ancient times, those who stood up as lords and kings did not do so to serve their desires, and sages who rejected rank did not do so for their own personal comfort. It was because the strong among the people oppressed the weak, majorities did violence to minorities, the cunning deceived the ignorant, and the strong invaded the weak. It was also because those with knowledge did not teach, and those who accumulated wealth did not share it.

That is why rulers were set up, to unify the people. Because the awareness of one person is incapable of attending to everything in the world, therefore officials were also set up to assist the rulers. Because different states with divergent customs could not share in the benefits, therefore representatives were setup to educate them. Thus heaven, earth, and the four seasons all responded. Officers did nothing covert, and nations lost no advantages; thus they clothed the cold, fed the hungry, nursed the elderly and the weak, and gave rest to the weary, taking everything into consideration.

Shen-nung was haggard, Yao was emaciated, Shun was burnt black, Yu was callused, I Yin became a cook to serve the nation, Lu Wang brandished

a sword to help overthrow a tyrant, Pai-li Hsi was sold into servitude, Kuan Chung was subject to constraint, Confucius had no soot in his chimney, Mo-tzu was never still long enough for his seat to get warm. These people did not work as they did because of craving for money or status; they wanted to work for the development of what would profit the world and the elimination of what was harmful to the people. I have never heard of anyone, from emperors down to common folk, who expected to be given what they needed without having done any work or done any serious thinking about things.

126

Lao-tzu said:

Emperors are called offspring of heaven insofar as they establish the world by means of the Way of heaven. In establishing the Way for the world, holding to unity is the means of preservation. Returning to the root, you are free from contrivance, empty and serene, unencumbered: ungraspably boundless, endlessly distant, it has no form when you look and no sound when you listen; this is called the course of the Way.

127

Lao-tzu said:

The body of the Way is round, the rule of the Way is square. Bearing yin and embracing yang, flexible on the left and firm on the right, walking in darkness and carrying light, transforming without fixation, attaining the source of unity to respond infinitely: this is called spiritual illumination.

Heaven is round and has no edges, so you cannot observe its form; earth is square and has no boundaries, so you cannot look into its door. Heaven develops and perfects without form, earth produces and grows without measure.

All things can be overcome, except the Way, which cannot be overcome. The reason it cannot be overcome is that it has no constant form or disposition. Its endless revolving is like the courses of the sun and moon, like the succession of the seasons, or the passage of day and night, ending and then beginning again, becoming light and then returning to darkness, controlling forms yet having no form. Thus can its work be accomplished.

It makes things and beings things and beings, yet is not a thing or a being; therefore it prevails and is not constrained.

Those who wage war in their ancestral shrines are lords, those who exert psychological influence are kings. Those who wage war in their ancestral shrines take their example from the Way of Nature; those who exert psychological influence understand the four seasons. Cultivate rectitude within your own domain, and those far away will take virtue to heart; seize victory before any battles are fought, and local leaders will pledge allegiance.

Those who attained the Way in ancient times emulated heaven and earth in quietude and followed the sun and moon in action; their emotions fit the four seasons, their directives were like thunder. Based on the desires of the people, riding on the power of the people, they got rid of savagery and destructiveness for them.

People who share the same material interests will die together, people who share the same feelings will complement each other, and people who share the same activities will help each other. Because they hold themselves back and move the world to fight, therefore those who employ armies skillfully deploy them where they will function spontaneously, whereas those who are unable to employ armies use them for their own personal purposes. If you use their own spontaneous action, everyone in the world can be employed; if you use them for your own personal purposes, no one in the world can be employed.

128

Lao-tzu said:

To master themselves, the highest adepts nurture the spirit, while those of lesser rank nurture the body.

When the spirit is clear and the mind is even, the whole body is at peace; this is the root of nurturing life. To fatten the flesh, fill the guts, and provide for the desires are the branches of nurturing life.

The highest way of governing a nation is by nurturing influence; next is by just law. When the people defer to each other, only vying for humility, modesty, and hard work, and they develop and improve day by day without knowing why it is so, this is the root of order. When people are encouraged to goodness by profitable rewards and deterred from evil by fear of

punishment, when laws are just and people are obedient, these are the branches of order.

In ancient times, they nurtured the root; in later times, they worked on the branches.

129

Lao-tzu said:

Leaders who want to govern are rare; ministers worthy of participation in government are virtually nonexistent. The rare seek the virtually nonexistent; this is the reason why perfect government is hardly seen once in a thousand years.

The fact of the matter is that the successful achievement of rulership is rarely established. If one goes along with their good intentions, prevents them from being malicious, and proceeds in concert with the people along a single path, then the people can be improved and customs can be beautified.

The reason sages are esteemed is not because they formulate penalties according to crimes, but because they know where disorder comes from. If its sharp edge is opened up and it is allowed to run its own course without any restraint, just being left up to the law and followed up with punishment, then even if it destroys the world that treachery cannot be stopped.

130

Lao-tzu said:

If you live in the hinterlands but your heart is in the capital, then you take life seriously. If you take life seriously, then take profit lightly. If you still cannot conquer yourself, then go along with your heart, and your spirit will not suffer harm. If you cannot conquer yourself but still force yourself not to follow your heart, this is what is called being doubly wounded. People who are doubly wounded never live long.

Therefore it is said that to know harmony is called the constant, and to know the constant is called illumination. To enhance life is called auspicious; the mind mastering the energy is called strength. This is referred to as mysterious sameness, using the radiance and then returning to the light.

Lao-tzu said:

Nothing in the world is easier than doing what is good, nothing is harder than doing what is not good. Doing what is good means being calm and uncontrived, suiting your true condition and refusing the rest, not being seduced by anything, following your essential nature, preserving reality, and not changing yourself. Therefore doing what is good is easy.

Doing what is not good means assassination and usurpation, fraud and deception, agitation and covetousness, denial of human nature. Therefore it is said that doing what is not good is hard.

That which now causes great troubles arises from lack of a normal degree of contentment. Therefore it is imperative to examine the grounds of benefit and harm, the borderline of calamity and fortune.

Sages do not want anything and do not avoid anything. When you want something, that may just make you lose it; and if you try to avoid something, that may just bring it about. When you desire something in your heart, then you forget what you are doing.

Therefore sages carefully examine the changes of action and repose, adjusting the measures of receiving and giving suitably, governing feelings of like and dislike rationally, and harmonizing degrees of joy and anger.

When action and repose are appropriate, then trouble cannot invade you. When receiving and giving are suitable, then blame does not burden you. When likes and dislikes are rational, then anxiety does not get near you. When joy and anger are harmonious, then enmity does not press upon you.

People who have attained the Way do not take wrongful gain and do not pass troubles on to others. They do not abandon what is theirs and do not seize what is not theirs. They are always full, but never to overflowing; they are always empty, and easily sufficed.

Therefore, when one suits oneself by appropriate measure through the arts of the Way, then one eats enough to satisfy hunger and dresses sufficiently to ward off the cold, providing warmth and satiety adequate for one body. If one lacks the arts of the Way to assess appropriate measure and wants nobility and rank, then all the power and wealth in the world will not be sufficient to make one pleased and happy.

So sages are even-minded and easygoing. Their vital spirits are guarded within, and cannot be deluded by things.

132

Lao-tzu said:

Those who overcome others have power, those who overcome themselves are strong. Those who can be strong are invariably those who can utilize the power of others. Those who can utilize the power of others are invariably those who win the hearts of others.

Therefore the basis of active government lies in giving people security. The basis of giving people security lies in providing for their needs. The basis of providing for their needs lies in not taking away their time. The basis of not taking away their time lies in minimizing projects. The basis of minimizing projects lies in moderating consumption. The basis of moderating consumption lies in getting rid of extravagance. The basis of getting rid of extravagance lies in emptiness.

Therefore those who know the true condition of life do not strive for what life can do nothing about; those who know the true condition of destiny do not worry about what destiny can do nothing about.

When the eyes delight in colors, the palate craves rich flavors, the ears indulge in music, and all the avenues of sense vie with one another, this damages the whole essential nature, daily bringing on perverse desires, exhausting the natural harmony: then one cannot even govern one's own body, much less govern the land.

To gain the land does not mean to assume power, rank, and title; it means to mobilize the hearts of the land and gain the strength of the land. If you have rulership in name but are not praised by anyone, this is to lose the land.

Therefore when the land has the Way, it is defended by all neighboring peoples. When the land loses the Way, it is defended by its own lords. If the lords gain the Way, their defense is in their borders; if the lords lose the Way, their defense is in their associates. Therefore it is said, "Do not rely on not being plundered, rely on being impossible to plunder." So to denounce assassination and usurpation while pursuing a course vulnerable to plunder is of no benefit to maintaining the land.

133

Lao-tzu said:

Those who are skilled at governing nations do not change their customs or norms. Wrathfulness is perversity, weapons are instruments of ill omen, contention is social disorder. Secret plotting, perversity, and fondness for employing instruments of ill omen are dysfunctions of government, the epitome of perversity.

If not for calamitous people, it is impossible to create calamity. It is better to blunt the edges, resolve the complications, harmonize awareness, and assimilate to the world.

Human nature and feelings are such that people all wish to consider themselves wise and hate to be inferior to others. If you wish to consider yourself wise, then contentiousness arises; if you hate to be inferior to others, then resentment and conflict arise. When resentment and contention arise, then the mind is deranged and one's attitude becomes vicious.

Therefore the sage kings of ancient times withdrew from contention and resentment. When contention and resentment do not arise, then the mind is orderly and the attitude is harmonious. Therefore it is said that if sagacity is not valued, this will cause the people not to contend.

134

Lao-tzu said:

Governing things is not done by things, but by harmony. Governing harmony is not done by harmony, but by people. Governing people is not done by people, but by rulers. Governing rulers is not done by rulers, but by desires. Governing desires is not done by desires, but by nature. Governing nature is not done by nature, but by virtue. Governing virtue is not done by virtue, but by the Way.

When you get to the root of human nature by means of the Way, there is no perversity or pollution; but when you are steeped in things for a long time, you forget that root and conform to a seeming nature.

Food, clothing, ritual, and customary usages are not human nature, they are taken on from without. Therefore human nature wants equanimity, but habitual cravings harm it. Only those who are imbued with the Way can detach from things and return to the self.

When you have means of reflecting on yourself, then you do not lose sight of the conditions and feelings of others. If you have no means of reflecting on yourself, then confusion comes into play when you act.

As long as you indulge in your desires to the point where you lose sight of your essential nature, action is never correct. If you try to maintain your health in this way, you will lose your body; if you try to govern a nation in this way, you will disturb people. So those who have not heard the Way have no means of returning to their essential nature.

In ancient times, sages attained this in themselves; so their directives were carried out and their prohibitions were effective deterrents. Whenever they initiated projects, they would first calm their minds and purify their spirits. When the spirit is pure and the mind is calm, then people can be correct.

When your hearing is lost to repudiation and praise, and your eyes indulge in colorful forms, then even if you want your affairs to be right, it will be impossible. This is why emptiness is valued. When water is stirred up, waves arise, when energy is disturbed, wisdom is dimmed. Dimmed wisdom cannot be used to determine what is correct, rippled water cannot be used as a level.

Therefore sage kings hold to unity, whereby to bring order to people's feelings and natures. Unity is most valuable, with nothing comparable in all the world. Because sage kings rely on the incomparable, they become directors of the world.

135

Lao-tzu said:

Yin and yang mold myriad beings; all of them are born of one energy. When the hearts of those above and those below are estranged, then energy evaporates. When rulers and ministers are not in harmony, the five grains do not ripen. Coldness in spring, blossoming in autumn, thunder in winter, and frost in summer are all products of destructive energy.

The space between heaven and earth is the body of one being; all within the universe is the form of one being. Therefore those who understand their essential nature cannot be threatened by heaven and earth; those who understand correspondences cannot be confused by strange things. Sages know the remote by way of the near, considering myriad miles one and the same.

When energy evaporates in heaven and earth, then courtesy, justice, modesty, and conscience are not established, and all the people transgress

upon each other; violence and cruelty are still there in the midst of indistinct vagueness.

When modesty and conscience decline, eventually society degenerates. Then there are many demands and few goods; people work hard without being able to make a sufficient living. The populace is poor and miserable, so anger and contention arise; this is why humaneness is valued. People are debased and unequal, cliques and factions each push for their own interests, hearts full of machinations and cunning deceptions; this is why justice is valued. Men and women mix indiscriminately; this is why courtesy is valued. The sense of essence and life is unruly, inharmonious when pressed by necessity; this is why music is valued.

So humaneness, justice, courtesy, and music are means of remedying decadence; they are not the way to comprehensive government.

If you can truly employ spiritual illumination to settle the land so that the mind returns to its origin, then the nature of the people will be good. When the nature of the people is good, then the yin and yang of heaven and earth accord with it and enfold it. Then there are enough goods and people are adequately supplied; greedy, mean, angry, and contentious attitudes cannot arise in them. Humaneness and justice are not employed, but the Way and its virtue settle the land, and the people do not indulge in ostentation.

So it is only after virtue declines that people dress up in humaneness and justice. It is only after harmony is lost that people embellish music. It is only after social behavior becomes dissolute that people adorn their appearances. Therefore it is only after you know the virtue of the Way that you know humaneness and justice are not worth practicing, and it is only after you know humaneness and justice that you know rites and music are not worth cultivating.

136

Lao-tzu said:

A clear and calm social order is characterized by harmony and tranquillity, plainness and simplicity, serenity and freedom from agitation. Inwardly united with the Way, outwardly conforming to justice, speech is brief and logical, action is joyful and sensible. Hearts are peaceful and true, works are plain and unadorned. There is no scheming in the beginning, and no debate in the end. Static when calm, active when stimulated, it forms a

continuity with heaven and earth, with the same vitality as yin and yang. Its unity harmonizes with the four seasons, its clarity is brighter than the sun and moon. Those who evolve along with the Way are truly human. Machination, cunning, fraud, and deceit are not carried in people's hearts, so heaven covers them with virtue and earth sustains them with comfort. The four seasons do not lose their order, wind and rain do not cause damage, the sun and moon clearly and calmly radiate their lights, the stars do not deviate from their courses. This is what is illumined by clarity and calm.

137

Lao-tzu said:

In an orderly society, jobs are easy to keep, work is easy to do, manners are easy to observe, debts are easy to repay. Therefore people do not hold more than one office simultaneously, and offices are not filled by more than one person at a time. Knights, farmers, artisans, and merchants live in separate quarters, so farmers talk to farmers about stores, knights talk to knights about conduct, artisans talk to artisans about skills, merchants talk to merchants about numbers.

In this way knights have no misdeeds, artisans have no crude works, farmers have no wasted labor, and merchants have no losses. Each group is at ease in its own element; though they are of diverse types and do different things, they are not opposed to each other. They are despised if they slip up in their work, honored when they attain their aim.

People who have foreknowledge and far-reaching vision are full of ability, but in an orderly society they do not use this to press others. People who are broadly learned, have strong memories, and are eloquent and expressive are full of knowledge, but enlightened leaders do not seek this in subordinates. To act independently of society, slighting things and not going along with common customs, is the haughty behavior of knights, but in an orderly society this is not used to guide the populace.

So that which is so lofty as to be beyond reach is not used as a measure of people; deeds that cannot be equaled are not suitable for national customs. Therefore talented people should not be relied upon alone to assess measures; the arts of the Way are to be transmitted by whole societies. Thus the order of a nation can be kept by the unsophisticated, and

military operations can be equalized by law. When people are satisfied by themselves without needing the heroes of old, it is because they use all of what they have.

The laws of latter-day societies make their measures high and punish those who cannot live up to them; they make responsibilities heavy and penalize those who cannot bear them; they make difficulties perilous and execute those who do not dare to confront them. When the people are overburdened by these three responsibilities, then they put on a show of cleverness to fool their rulers; they become crooked and act in dangerous ways. Then even stern laws and strict punishments cannot prevent them from being treacherous. This is what is meant by the saying that when beasts are cornered they lunge, when birds are cornered they peck, and when people are cornered they deceive.

138

Lao-tzu said:

Lightning and thunder can be imitated by cymbals and drums, the changes in wind and rain can be known by the rhythm of their sound. What is large enough to see can be measured, what is clear enough to see can be concealed. Audible sounds can be harmonized, perceptible forms can be distinguished.

What is most great cannot be enclosed even by heaven and earth, what is most minute cannot be seen even by spirits. When it comes to the point where you set up calendrical divisions, distinguish colors, differentiate clear and cloudy sounds, and taste sweet and bitter flavors, then simple wholeness is divided up to become specific instrumentality.

When you set up humanity and duty, and cultivate rites and music, then virtue changes to become artifice. When people put on a show of knowledge to startle the ignorant, and contrive ruses to attack those above them, then there are those who can hold the land but none who can govern it.

The more knowledge and ability there are, the more virtue declines; so perfect people are pure and simple, without useless complexity. The government of perfect people is unassertive and unobtrusive, not displaying anything to want. Mind and spirit are at rest, the physical body and the essential nature are in tune. In repose they embody virtue, in action they

succeed by reason. Following the Way of naturalness, they focus on the inevitable. They are serene and uncontrived, and the land is at peace; they are aloof and desireless, and the people are naturally simple. They do not contend in anger, and material goods are sufficient. Those who give do not consider that benevolence, and those who receive do not decline. Blessings come back to them, but no one considers it a favor.

As for the unspoken explanation and the unexpressed Way, if you comprehend them, this is called the celestial storehouse. You can take from it without diminishing it, you can draw on it without exhausting it. No one knows where it is, but when you seek from it, it produces. This is called the shimmering light; the shimmering light is what gives sustenance to all beings.

139

Lao-tzu said:

Heaven loves its vitality, earth loves its constants, humanity loves its feelings. The vitality of heaven is the sun and moon, stars and planets, thunder and lightning, wind and rain. The constants of earth are water, fire, metal, wood, and soil. The feelings of humanity are thought, intelligence, and emotions.

So close the gates and pathways of the senses, and you merge with the Way; the light of the spirit hides in formlessness, vitality and energy return to reality. The eyes are clear without needing to look, the ears are keen without needing to listen, the mind is rational without needing to think. Letting be without contrivance, knowing without conceit; because it is knowledge through realization of the true state of essence and life, it cannot cause harm.

When vitality is in the eyes, they see clearly. When it is in the ears, they hear keenly. When it is gathered in the mind, then the thoughts are penetrating. Therefore when you shut the gates of the senses, you have no troubles all your life; the limbs and orifices neither die nor are born. This is called being a real human.

140

Lao-tzu said:

A balance is impartial; that is why it can be used for a scale. A plumb line is impartial; that is why it can be used for a rule. The law of a true leader is impartial; that is why it can be used for direction. When there is neither favoritism nor hidden resentment, this is reliance on the Way and accord with human hearts.

Therefore cunning has nothing to do with the practice of government. When a boat is broken by rough waters, or an axle is snapped when struck by a piece of wood, you blame the incompetence of the craftsman, you don't resent the elements themselves, because this is not done by their cunning. So to have cunning on the Way results in confusion, to have intention in virtue results in danger, to have eyes in the mind results in blindness.

The balance, compass, and ruler are uniformly fixed and unchanging, always the same and never inaccurate, working correctly and inexhaustibly. Once formed, they can be handed on forever; this is uncontrived action.

Unity means noncontrivance; a hundred kings may use this, myriad generations may transmit it, for it applies unchanging.

141

Lao-tzu said:

People say that a country may have a destructive leadership, a destructive society, or a destructive way of life. People may come to an impasse, but there is nothing that truth does not penetrate.

Therefore noncontrivance is the source of the Way. Attain the source of the Way, and you can use it inexhaustibly. If you do not go by calculation according to the pattern of the Way, but concentrate on your own abilities alone, it will not be long before you come to an impasse.

A leader who knows the world without going out the door discerns things by things and knows people by people. Therefore anything that is taken up by accumulated power can be managed, and anything that is done by collective knowledge can be accomplished. With a group of a thousand people, food will never run out; with a mass of a thousand people, work is never wasted.

When artisans have the same skills and knights do not hold multiple offices, they keep to their own jobs and do not interfere with each other;

people find what is right for them, everything is in its place. In this way machines are not troublesome and workers are not negligent.

When debts are small, it is easy to repay them; when tasks are few, it is easy to take care of them; when responsibilities are light, it is easy to handle them. When those above play a minimal part and those below accomplish works that are easy to do, in this way rulers and subjects maintain their relationship without wearying of one another.

142

Lao-tzu said:

Emperors comprehend absolute unity, kings emulate yin and yang, hegemons imitate the four seasons, lords employ the six rules.

To comprehend absolute unity means to understand the conditions of heaven and earth and penetrate the norms of the virtues of the Way. Intelligence shines more brightly than the sun and moon, the vital spirit communes with all beings and all things, action and repose are in tune with yin and yang, joy and anger are in harmony with the four seasons, concealment and revelation are all in accord with the Way, universal and impartial. All creatures live on that virtue; the virtue flows beyond the realm, its good name is transmitted to future generations.

To emulate yin and yang means to take on the harmony of heaven and earth, with virtues in common with heaven and earth, light shining with the sun and moon, vital spirit as effective as supernatural beings, carrying the round and treading on the square, inwardly and outwardly simple and straightforward, able to govern oneself and win the hearts of others, so that the whole land follows directives when they are issued.

To imitate the four seasons means to grow in spring, develop in summer, harvest in autumn, and store in winter, giving and taking in moderation, dispensing and collecting with measure. Joy and anger, firmness and flexibility, are within reason: flexible without being weak, firm without snapping, easygoing but not indulgent, stern but not vicious, nurturing all beings with serene harmony, that virtue embracing the ignorant and admitting the uncultivated, without personal favoritism.

To employ the six rules means to enliven and to kill, to reward and to punish, to give and to take; without these, there is no Way. It means to strike down disorder, prevent violence, promote the wise and good, get rid of the

unworthy, correct the errant, level the uneven, straighten the crooked, understand what to carry out and what to reject, realize what to open up and what to shut down, employing people's minds according to the time and situation.

If emperors do not comprehend yin and yang, they are invaded. If kings do not emulate the four seasons, they are dethroned. If hegemons do not employ the six rules, they are disgraced. If lords lose sight of guidelines, they are rejected. Therefore if the small act in grandiose ways, they come to an impasse, if the great act in petty ways, they are narrow and unaccommodating.



143

Lao-tzu said:

A vast territory and a large population are not enough to constitute power; strong armor and sharp weapons cannot be relied upon to ensure victory; high ramparts and deep moats are not enough to give security; strict punishments and stern laws are not sufficient to constitute authority.

Those who practice policies that make for survival will surely survive even if they are small; those who practice policies that make for destruction will surely perish even if they are large. Therefore skillful defense has nothing to do with resistance, and skillful warfare has nothing to do with battle. If you take advantage of the momentum of the times and accord with the wishes of the people, the world will follow.

So those who are skilled at government build up their benevolence, while those who are skilled at military operations build up their wrath. When benevolence has built up, the people are amenable to being employed; when anger has built up, power can be established. Therefore when culture is deeply ingrained, authority has great influence; when benevolence is widely shared, power has vast control. Thus you become strong while your enemies are weakened.

Those who are skilled at military operations first weaken their enemies, and only then do they fight. For this reason their expenditures are greatly reduced, while their efficiency is tremendously multiplied. So if a small country is cultured and benevolent, it rules; while if a large country is militaristic it perishes. Whereas a ruling army wins before it goes to battle,

a defeated army goes to battle before it seeks to win; this is because it does not understand the Way.

 144

Lao-tzu said:

The way of developed people is to cultivate the body by calmness and nurture life by frugality. When there is calm, those below are not agitated, when those below are not agitated, then the people are not resentful.

When those below are agitated, then government is disorderly; when the people are resentful, then virtue is slight. When government is disorderly, then the wise do not do the planning for it; when virtue is slight, the brave do not fight for it.

Arbitrary rulers are not like developed people. When they come to possess the wealth of a land and occupy the position of rulership, they exhaust the energy of the common people to pander to their own sensual desires. Their minds are preoccupied with palaces, chambers, terraces, ponds, gardens, beasts, rarities, and curios. The poor people starve, while tigers and wolves have their fill of fine food. The farmers freeze in the cold, while the inhabitants of the palaces wear decorated silks.

So when rulers accumulate these useless things, the lives of everyone in the world are insecure.

 145

Lao-tzu said:

Without aloofness and detachment, there is no way to clarify virtue; without stability and calm, there is no way to get far. Without breadth and magnanimity, there is no way to encompass all; without rectitude and fairness, there is no way to determine judgments.

By seeing with the eyes of everyone in the land, hearing with the ears of everyone in the land, thinking with the minds of everyone in the land, and striving with the strength of everyone in the land, it is possible for directives to reach all the way to the lower echelons, and for the feelings of subjects to be heard by the rulers.

Then all offices are managed successfully, all ministers cooperate Delight is not used as a reason to hand out prizes, anger is not used as a reason to mete out punishments. Laws and directives are considerate and not cruel,

ears and eyes are clear and not dim. Good and bad situations are presented daily, without giving offense, so the wise use all of their knowledge and the hoi polloi exert all of their strength. Those nearby are secure, while those far off take that virtue to heart. This is attainment of the Way of employing people.

Those who ride in cars can go a thousand miles without strain, those who ride in boats can cross rivers and seas without swimming. If what they say is right, even people of lowly estate are not to be rejected; if what they say is wrong, even people of high rank are not to be accepted. Questions of right and wrong are not to be decided on the basis of social status. If their plans are useful, status does not matter; if what they say is applicable, eloquence is not important.

Benighted rulers are not like this. Ministers who are completely sincere and actually loyal are rare, because such people are not employed. The rulers consort with crooked people, so they cannot see those who are good; they despise the lowly, so they cannot hear of those who exert their strength to the full and are completely loyal. Those who have something to say are driven to their wits' end about matters of rhetoric, while those who have criticisms are punished as though they had committed crimes. Rulers who are like this and yet want to pacify the land and maintain their territories are far indeed from intelligence.

146

Lao-tzu said:

If you honor life, even if you are rich and noble you will not injure your body by overeating, and even if you are poor and lowly you will not burden your body by profit seeking.

Now if you have received a title as a legacy from your ancestors, you will surely lose it if you take it too seriously. Your life derives from the remote past; are you not deluded if you lose it by taking it too lightly?

Governing the land by valuing the individual is a suitable basis for being entrusted with the land; governing the land by caring for the individual is a reason for being given charge of the land.

147

When Wen-tzu asked about the basis of governing a country, Lao-tzu said:

The basis is in governing the individual. When nothing has been learned about governing the individual, the country falls into disorder. Never has there been an orderly country where individuals are disorderly. Therefore it is said that when you cultivate it in yourself, that virtue is real.

The reason for the extreme subtlety of the Way cannot be taught by parents to their children, and cannot be learned by children from their parents. Therefore a way that can be articulated is not an eternal way, and names that can be designated are not constant names.

148

When Wen-tzu asked what conduct would make the people feel close to their leaders, Lao-tzu said:

Employ them in season and be respectful and prudent, as if you were facing a deep abyss, or walking on thin ice. Everyone in the world is your ward if treated well and your enemy if not treated well.

In ancient times, the subjects of the Hsia and Yin dynasties rebelled against the tyrants Chou and Chieh, becoming subjects to the popular leaders T'ang and Wu; the people of Su-sha attacked their own ruler and switched their allegiance to Shen-nung.

Therefore it is said, what people fear cannot but be feared.

149

Lao-tzu said:

The way of those who govern large areas should not be small; the regulations of those whose territory is broad should not be narrow. The affairs of those whose ranks are high should not be complicated; the commands of those whose subjects are many should not be harsh.

When affairs are complicated, they are hard to manage. When laws are harsh, they are hard to administer. When demands are many, they are hard to satisfy.

If you measure by inches, you are sure to be off by the time you reach ten feet. If you weigh by grains, you are sure to be mistaken by the time you reach a stone. If you weigh by stones and measure in tens of feet, the process is briefer, and with fewer mistakes. Knowledge is easily developed by general comparisons; wisdom is hard to develop by petty distinctions.

Therefore sages will not do anything that fails to enhance order but does add to disorder; the wise will not do anything that fails to enhance usefulness but does add to expenditure. So works should be streamlined, business should be simplified, and demands should be minimized.

When works are streamlined, they are easy to accomplish. When business is simplified, it is easy to manage. When demands are minimized, they are easy to fulfill. When responsibility is delegated to many people, it is easily borne.

So petty discrimination ruins duty, petty duty ruins the way. If the way is small, it will not get through. What successfully gets through is simple

A river can reach afar because it goes along twisting and turning. A mountain can be high because it slopes. The Way can transform because it is transcendent.

Those who are competent in a single craft, knowledgeable in a single business, or versed in a single skill, may thereby talk of details but cannot adapt universally.

In tuning musical instruments, small strings are tight while long strings are slack. In carrying out business, the lower echelons work while the upper echelons have leisure.

A statement of the Way says, “In the vast unknown, rely on the power of Nature, sharing the same energy as Nature. Those who share the same energy are emperors; those who share the same duty are kings; those who share the same achievement are hegemons. Those who haven’t even one of these perish.”

So when you are trusted without speaking, benevolent without giving, and awesome without wrath, this is actively exerting influence by means of the celestial mind. When you are giving and therefore benevolent, trusted when you speak, and awesome in your wrath, then you are doing it by pure sincerity. If you give but are not benevolent, speak but are not trusted, and get angry but are not awesome, then you are doing it by outward appearance.

So when they are arranged by the Way, even if there are few laws they are sufficient for order. If the Way is not there to arrange them, even if there are many laws they can cause chaos.

Lao-tzu said:

A whale out of water is overrun by ants, a ruler who has given up what he should hold to and fights with ministers over affairs is controlled by officials. When the leadership is held by noncontrivance, then functionaries obey orders to gain approval, and subordinates conceal their knowledge and do not use it rebelliously, thus working wholeheartedly for the leadership.

If rulers do not delegate authority to the capable and are inclined to do things themselves, then their knowledge will be strained from day to day, and they will bear the blame themselves. When calculations are frustrated at the bottom, then it is impossible to express reason; when actions have fallen into positions, then it is impossible to maintain control.

When knowledge is not sufficient to govern and authority is not sufficient to administer laws, then there is no way to interact with the populace. When emotions take shape in the heart and desires are outwardly visible, then functionaries will deviate from rectitude and flatter their superiors, while officers will bend the law and turn whichever way the wind blows.

If rewards do not correspond to achievements and punishments do not fit crimes, then those above and those below will be estranged from each other, rulers and subjects will resent each other, the whole apparatus of government will be in disarray, and knowledge will not be able to achieve a resolution.

When repudiation and praise arise to the point where clarification of facts is impossible, and leaders take the blame for what is not their fault, then the leaders become increasingly overwrought, while the ministers become increasingly irresponsible. This is what is called doing the chopping in place of the carpenter; those who do the chopping in place of the carpenter rarely avoid cutting their hands

If you race with a horse, you may exert yourself to the point where your tendons snap, but even then you will never catch up with it. If you get into a chariot and take control of the reins, the horse will die at the yoke. If a horse is chosen by an expert and trained by an expert, when an intelligent ruler rides on it he can go a thousand miles without the bother of choosing and training a horse. This is skillfully taking advantage of people’s talents.

The way of human leaders does not involve contrivance, but it does involve following. It involves establishment, but it does not involve favoritism. When there is contrivance, there is argument; when there is

favoritism, there is flattery. When there is argument, usurpation is possible; when there is flattery, seduction is possible.

Those who control people by means of setups cannot hold a nation. Therefore when it is said that a good setup cannot be taken apart, that means the setup has no form. Only those who rule by spiritual influence are impossible to overcome.

When desires do not emerge within, this is called shutting up; when falsehoods do not enter in from without, this is called closing up. When you are shut within and closed without, what matter is not under control? When you are closed within and shut without, what undertaking does not succeed? Thus, without exploitation or contrivance there is function and action.

151

Lao-tzu said:

Food is the basis of the people, the people are the foundation of the nation. Therefore human leaders go by the seasons of the heavens above, conform to the patterns of the earth below, and employ the strengths of humanity in between. In this way myriad beings grow and proliferate.

In spring dead trees are felled, in summer fruits are harvested, in autumn nuts are stored, in winter firewood is gathered. These are for the sustenance of the people, so that they do not lack for necessities and do not collapse and die.

There were laws of ancient kings not to surround the herds to take the full-grown animals, not to drain the ponds to catch fish, and not to burn the woods to hunt for game. Before the proper seasons, traps were not to be set out in the wild and nets were not to be set in the water. No cutting was to be done in the forests before the falling of the leaves, the fields were not to be burnt over before the insects went into hibernation. Pregnant animals were not to be killed, birds' eggs were not to be sought out, fish less than a foot long were not to be taken, domestic animals less than a year old were not to be eaten. Thus the growth of all creatures was like vapor issuing forth.

This is the way that ancient kings adapted to the seasons, cultivated plenitude, enriched their countries, and profited their people. This way is not seen by the eyes and walked by the feet; if you want to profit the people, don't forget the heart, and the people will naturally be sufficed.

152

Lao-tzu said:

Enlightened leaders of ancient times limited what they took from their subjects and were moderate in their own living. They would always assess yearly income before taking anything: measuring the stores of the people, they gathered taxes only after determining whether there were surpluses or shortfalls. Thus they were able to partake of what was received from heaven and earth, and avoid the afflictions of hunger and cold. Their compassion for the people was such that they did not season their own food if there was any hunger in the country, and they did not wear leather themselves if any of the people were cold. They shared the same pains and pleasures as the people, so there were no downcast people in all the land.

Ignorant rulers are not like this: they take from the people without assessing their strength, seek from their subjects without measuring their stores. Men and women cannot attend to their plowing and weaving, because they have to provide for the demands of the rulers; their strength overexerted and their wealth exhausted, every morning they are unsure of living through that day. The rulers and their subjects hate each other.

Human life is such that if one man cultivates no more than an acre and a half and harvests no more than five hundred pounds of grain, then his family can eat. If there is a bad year and there is nothing to give to the government, then a humane leader will be merciful. If greedy rulers and cruel lords bleed their subjects dry to cater to their own endless desires, then the common people do not partake of the harmony of heaven and the blessings of earth.

153

Lao-tzu said:

Of the energies of the universe, none is greater than harmony. Harmony means the regulation of yin and yang, the division of night and day. Thus myriad beings are born in spring and mature in autumn. Birth and maturation require the vitality of harmony, so accumulated yin does not produce and accumulated yang does not develop; only when yin and yang interact are they capable of producing harmony.

Therefore the Way of sages is to be magnanimous yet stern, strict yet warm, gentle yet straightforward, fierce yet humane. What is too hard snaps, and what is too soft folds: the Way is right in between hardness and softness. Benevolence pushed too far becomes weakness, which is undignified. Strictness pushed too far becomes ferocity, which is inharmonious. Love pushed too far becomes indulgence, which is ineffectual. Punishment pushed too far becomes calamity, which means loss of familiars. This is why harmony is valued.

154

Lao-tzu said:

What enables a nation to survive is attainment of the Way; what causes a nation to perish is obstruction of reason. Therefore sages see the development of society by observing its signs. Virtue flourishes and declines, fashions being the first indications thereof.

So those who attain the Way of life will inevitably become great even if they are small; those who have the signs of morbidity will inevitably fail even if they are now successful. When a nation is moribund, greatness is not enough to depend on; but if the Way is carried out therein, even a small nation is not to be slighted.

Thus survival is in attainment of the Way, not in smallness; ruin is in losing the Way, not in greatness. The rulers of a confused country strive for expansion of territory, not for humanity and justice; they strive for high positions, not for the Way and virtue. This is abandoning the means of survival and creating the causes of destruction.

If they disturb the lights of the sun, moon, and stars above, and lose the hearts of the masses of people below, who could not blame them? Therefore those who examine the self do not attribute it to others.

When those who acted as leaders in ancient times practiced it deeply, it was called the Way and virtue; when they practiced it shallowly, it was called humanity and justice; when they practiced it slightly, it was called courtesy and knowledge.

These six things constitute the fabric of a nation. When they are practiced deeply, then blessings are richly received. When they are practiced shallowly, then blessings are slightly received. When they are practiced to the fullest, the whole world goes along.

In ancient times, to cultivate the Way and its virtue could bring order to the whole land; to cultivate humanity and justice could bring order to one state; to cultivate courtesy and knowledge could bring order to one county. Those whose virtue was rich were great, and those whose virtue was slight were small.

So the Way is not to establish oneself by aggressiveness, not to conquer by forcefulness, not to gain by competitiveness. Establishment is in being promoted by the world, victory is in the spontaneous accord of the world, and gain is in having the world give it to you, not in taking it for yourself.

Thus you will become established if you are unaggressive, you will be victorious if you are flexible and yielding, and you will gain if you are humane and just. If you do not contend, no one can contend with you. This is why the Way is to the world as rivers and oceans.

The Way of Nature is spoiled by those who contrive, lost by those who try to grasp. Look at those who want to have a great reputation and therefore seek and struggle for it: we see they cannot stop themselves, but even if they gain it by grasping, it does not stay.

Repute cannot be obtained by seeking, it must be given by the world. Those who give it resort to it. What the world resorts to is virtue. Therefore it is said that the world resorts to those of higher virtue, the land resorts to those of higher humanity, a state resorts to those of higher justice, and a county resorts to those of higher courtesy.

The people will not take to anyone who lacks these four qualities. To arm and deploy people who do not have confidence in their government is a dangerous course of action. That is why it is said that weapons are instruments of ill omen, to be used only when unavoidable.

When you win by killing and wounding people, do not glorify it. Thus it is said that brambles grow on a ground where people have died; weep for them with sadness, lay them to rest with the rites of mourning. This is why superior people strive for the virtue of the Way and do not set great store by the use of the military.

155

Wen-tzu asked: Why are humaneness, justice, and politeness considered slighter than the virtue of the Way?

Lao-tzu said: Those who practice humaneness deliberately always calculate it in terms of sorrow and happiness, those who practice justice deliberately always understand it in terms of taking and giving. One's sorrow and happiness cannot extend to all within the four seas; the goods and money in an exhausted treasury are not enough to provide for all people.

Therefore we know that it is better to practice the Way and put its virtue into effect. Based on the essential nature of heaven and earth, all beings right themselves, and the whole world is fulfilled. Humaneness and justice are dependent and subsidiary. Therefore great people live by the deep, not by the shallow.

As for politeness, it is an embellishment of substance. Humaneness is an effect of benevolence. Therefore politeness is to be regulated according to human feelings so that it does not exceed what is substantial. Humaneness does not mean to squander charity; seeing off the dead with feelings of sorrow can be called humaneness.

The nurturing of life does not force people to do what they cannot do, or stop them from doing what they cannot help doing. When assessments of measure do not miss what is appropriate, censure and praise have no way to arise.

So in the composition of music it is enough to join feelings of enjoyment, not going beyond harmony, understanding the proportions of diminuendo and crescendo, mastering the appropriate measures of magnificence and austerity.

Things are not this way in latter-day societies. Words and actions are opposed to each other, feelings and appearances contradict each other. Polite manners are embellished to the point of tedium, music is agitated to the point of licentiousness, customs are sunk in mundanity, and censure and praise cluster in the courts. This is why realized people abandon these things and do not use them.

A man cannot outrun a swift horse, but if the horse were put into a cart it could not outrun a man. Therefore those who use the Way skillfully employ the resources of other people to accomplish their tasks, using what they can do for what they cannot.

When rulers give them time, the people repay with goods; when rulers treat them politely, the people will go to their death to repay. For this

reason, when there are nations in peril, there are no safe rulers; when there are worried rulers, there are no happy ministers.

Those whose virtue exceeds their rank are honored; those whose salary exceeds their virtue are accursed. The nobility of virtue involves no aggrandizement; a just salary is not too much. Those who are ennobled without virtue are stealing rank, those who take unjustly are stealing wealth.

Sages are comfortable in poverty, enjoying the Way. They do not harm life by craving and do not burden themselves by materialism. Therefore they do not deviate from justice by taking what they do not deserve.

In ancient times, those without virtue were not honored, those without ability were not entrusted with official posts, those without merit were not rewarded, and those who had done no wrong were not punished. When people were promoted, it was done with courtesy; when people were dismissed, it was done with justice. In the age of petty people, when people are promoted it is as if they are elevated to the skies, and when people are dismissed it is as if they are plunged into an abyss. When we speak of ancient times, we do so to criticize the present.

Those who size up horses miss the lean ones, those who choose men miss the impoverished ones. When the larder is full of rich meats, no one cares about bones and gristle.

Superior people look into realities and do not believe words of slander. When rulers have erred, ministers who do not admonish them are not loyal, while rulers who do not listen when admonished are not enlightened. Leaders who do not worry when the people are depressed are not intelligent. So to keep self-control even to the death in difficulty is the job of servants of society; to clothe the cold and feed the hungry is the benevolence of kind fathers.

For the great to serve the small is called changing people; for the small to oppress the great is called rebelling against Nature. Although they may climb to the skies at first, later they will inevitably fall into an abyss. This is why villages do not abandon the aged even if they are helpless, while courts have differences in the status of ranks.

Those who revere nobles do so because they consider them near to the ruler. Those who honor the aged do so because they consider them near to their parents. Those who respect their elders do so because they consider them near to their elder siblings.

Those who are born into nobility become arrogant, those who are born into riches become extravagant. Therefore wealth and status are not conducive to understanding the Way. Few indeed are those who watch themselves and are able to avoid doing anything wrong.

To learn without tiring of it is the way to govern oneself. To teach without tiring of it is the way to govern the people. Few indeed are those who associate with wise teachers and good companions and yet do wrong.

To know practical goodness is called knowledge, to love practical goodness is called humaneness, to honor practical goodness is called justice, to respect practical goodness is called courtesy, and to enjoy practical goodness is called music.

In ancient times, those who worked skillfully for the world did not contrive anything, yet nothing was not done. So there is a manner of working for the world: if you find out how, there is accomplishment without striving; if you do not find out how, your actions will inevitably be unlucky.

The manner in which to work for the world is to do so hesitantly, as if you were crossing a mighty river in winter; cautiously, as if in fear of all around; respectfully, as if you were a guest; be as liberal as runoff from ice, as pure as a simpleton, as opaque as a suspension, as broad as a valley. This is how to work for the world.

To be as hesitant as if crossing a mighty river in winter means not to act presumptuously. To be as cautious as if in fear of all around means to be wary of all that is harmful. To be as respectful as if one were a guest means to be be humble and reverential. To be as liberal as runoff from ice means not daring to pile up treasures. To be as pure as a simpleton means not daring to do things carelessly. To be as opaque as a suspension means not presuming to clarity. To be broad as a valley means not daring to be completely full.

Those who do not go ahead presumptuously do not dare to be the first to retreat. Those who are wary of harm to themselves remain flexible and yielding, not daring to be haughty. Those who are humble and reverential lower themselves and honor other people. Those who do not dare to pile up treasures reduce themselves and do not dare to be tight. Those who do not dare to do things carelessly consider themselves lacking and do not presume to be complete. Those who do not presume to clarity remain in obscurity and ignominy and do not presume to the new and fresh. Those who do not

dare to be completely full see what they lack and do not presume themselves worthy.

The Way is such that it is possible to go ahead by retreating, possible to be honored by maintaining flexibility, possible to be elevated by lowering oneself, possible to be fulfilled by diminishing oneself, possible to be complete by faulting oneself, possible to be new and fresh by being obscure and ignominious, possible to be good by seeing one's lack. The Way contrives nothing, but there is nothing it does not do.

156

Lao-tzu said:

In matters of learning, if you can understand the division between the celestial and the human, penetrate the roots of order and confusion, keep this awareness by clarifying the mind and purifying the attention, see the end and the beginning, and return to open nonreification, this can be called attainment.

The roots of order are humaneness and justice; the branches of order are laws and regulations. Human life is based on the roots, not on the branches. The roots and branches are one body; their duality is in the nature of preference. Those who give priority to the roots before the branches are called superior people; those who give priority to the branches before the roots are called petty people.

Laws are originated to assist justice; to take laws so seriously that justice is abandoned is to value the hat and shoes while forgetting the head and feet.

Humaneness and justice are broad and high. If you extend the breadth of something without increasing its thickness, it breaks; if you increase the height of a building without broadening its foundation, it topples. So if you do not make the beams large, they cannot sustain heavy weights. For bearing a heavy weight, nothing compares to a beam; for bearing the responsibility for a nation, nothing compares to virtue.

The people are to a ruler as a foundation of a citadel, as the roots of a tree. If the roots are deep, the tree is stable; if the foundation is thick, the building on top is secure.

So whatever business is not rooted in the virtue of the Way cannot be taken as a norm; words that do not accord with the ancient kings cannot be

taken as a guide. The art of facile talk picking up on a single deed or a single work is not the comprehensive Way for the world.

157

Lao-tzu said:

The way to govern people is like an expert charioteer: he adjusts the bits and bridles properly, stands in the center inside, and accords with the will of the horses outside; therefore he can take to the road and go long distances, with energy to spare, going forth and back and round and about, all as he wills. This is true attainment of the art.

Now those who hold power are the chariot of the ruler, and the great ministers are the ruler's team of horses. The ruler should not leave the security of the chariot, and his hands should not lose hold of the hearts of the team of horses. If the horses are unruly, even an expert charioteer cannot take to the road; if the ruler and ministers are not in harmony, even a sage cannot establish order.

If you hold to the Way for guidance, then ordinary talent can be put to the fullest use; if you clarify people's roles for them, then treachery can be stopped. When things come up, you observe their evolution; when events occur, you respond to their developments. When there is no disorder near at hand, then there is order far away. Attaining the natural spontaneous Way without making use of chance instruction, you may accomplish myriad undertakings without mishap.

158

Lao-tzu said:

In general, the practice of the Way involves blocking off errors, stopping them before they happen. It does not value self-approval, it values inability to do wrong.

Therefore it is said, "Do not cause anything to be desired, or there will be constant seeking; do not let anything be up for grabs, or there will be constant struggle." In this way people's desires melt and the impartial Way is carried out.

When those who have more than enough stop at good measure, and those with less than enough gain access to what they need, the world can therefore be one.

If you listen to criticism and praise instead of paying attention to the work people do, if you rely on factions and cliques instead of considering merit and effort, then weird arts will be perpetuated while ordinary work will not progress; the mores of the people will become confused in the country, while the successful ministers will contend at court.

Therefore if you have the Way, you guide people thereby; without the Way, you will be controlled by others.

159

Lao-tzu said:

There are constants for governing nations, but the basis is benefiting the people; there are ways for promulgating policies, but the precedent is to implement them. If you benefit the people, it is not necessary to be ruled by precedent; if you manage everything, it is not necessary to follow custom.

Therefore the laws of sages change with the times, and their manners evolve with customs. Their clothing and machinery are each made conveniently functional, their laws and regulations are each based on what is appropriate. Therefore to repudiate changing the ancient is not quite appropriate; to go along with customs is not enough to consider superior.

To recite the books of ancient kings is not as good as hearing their words, and hearing their words is not as good as attaining that whereby they spoke. Those who attain that whereby they spoke find that words cannot express it. Therefore a way that can be spoken is not an eternal Way, and a term that can be designated is not a permanent name.

Thus what sages go by is called the Way, which like percussion instruments is not to be changed once tuned. Concrete affairs, on the other hand, are like stringed instruments, which are returned after a piece is ended. Laws, regulations, rites, and music are tools of order; they are not what makes order order. Therefore the ultimate Way cannot be discussed with trivial scholars, because they look to conventions for enlightenment and are bound up in dogma.

160

Lao-tzu said:

How could the world have permanently fixed laws? Deal with the age appropriately, find out reasonable patterns of humanity, accord with heaven

and earth, and understand ghosts and spirits; then it is possible to govern correctly.

In antiquity, the Three August Ones had no regulations or directives, yet the people followed them; the Five Lords had regulations and directives, but no punishments or penalties. King Yu of the Hsia dynasty did not go back on his word; the people of the Yin dynasty made promises; the people of the Chou dynasty made pledges. With the deterioration of later eras, there was contempt and disregard for the lower classes; there was greed for gain, and little shame.

So laws and regulations are to be adjusted according to the mores of the people; instruments and machines are to be adjusted according to the changes of the times. Therefore people who are constrained by rules cannot participate in the planning of new undertakings, and people who are sticklers for ritual cannot be made to respond to changes. It is necessary to have the light of individual perception and the clarity of individual learning before it is possible to master the Way in action.

Those who know where laws come from adapt them to the times; those who do not know the source of ways to order may follow them but eventually wind up with chaos. Scholars nowadays practice their work routinely, holding books in their hands and watching out for rules of grammar, wishing to effect social order by this means. Is this not holding onto a prescription that has failed to cure, or putting a square peg in a round hole? It will be hard to get the right fit.

To sustain the imperiled and bring order to chaos is not possible without wisdom. As far as talking of precedents and extolling the ancient is concerned, there are plenty of ignoramuses who do that. Therefore sages do not act upon laws that are not useful, and do not listen to words that have not proven effective.

161

Wen-tzu asked: What is law based on?

Lao-tzu said: Law arises from justice, justice arises from what is appropriate for the masses, and what is appropriate for the masses is what accords with the people’s minds. This is the essence of order.

Law does not descend from heaven, nor does it emerge from earth; it is invented through human self-reflection and self-correction. If you truly

arrive at the root, you will not be confused by the branches; if you know what is essential, you will not be mixed up by doubts.

If you have it in yourself, you do not deny it for others; if you do not have it in yourself, you do not blame it on status. What is established among the lower echelons is not to be ignored in the upper echelons; what is forbidden to the people at large is not to be practiced by privileged individuals.

Therefore when human leaders determine laws, they should first apply them to themselves to test and prove them. So if a regulation works on the rulers themselves, then it may be enjoined upon the populace.

Laws are the plumb lines of the land, the measures used by human leaders, the established rules regulating the unruly. After laws have been established, those who conform to them are rewarded, while those who do not live up to them are punished. Even if people are rich and noble, their rewards are not to be lessened, and even if people are poor and lowly, their punishments are not to be increased; those who violate the law are to be punished without fail even if they are good people, while those who conform to the law are to be considered innocent even if they are good-for-nothings. For this reason impartiality is practiced and private wishes are blocked.

Officers were established in ancient times to restrain the people from being too selfish, while rulers were set up to control the officers and prevent them from acting autocratically. Laws and the arts of the Way are means of controlling rulers, to prevent them from making arbitrary decisions. If no one can be self-indulgent, then the Way prevails and reason is attained.

Therefore return to simplicity, with no contrivance. No contrivance does not mean inaction, it means adapting to what is already going on.



162

Lao-tzu said:

Those who are skillful at rewarding provide much encouragement at little expense, those who are skillful at penalization prevent treachery with minimal punishment. Those who are skillful at giving are frugal yet considered benevolent; those who are skillful at taking have a lot of income but are not resented.

Therefore sages encourage good based on what the people like, and prohibit evil based on what the people dislike. When they reward one person, everybody takes to them, and when they punish one person, everyone fears them.

This is why the best reward is not expensive, and the best punishment is not arbitrary. This is what is meant by the saying that what sages keep is minimal while what they govern is vast.

163

Lao-tzu said:

The path of ministers is to discuss what is right and to manage appropriately, to take the lead in doing things, to keep to their jobs and clearly understand their parts, thereby to establish effective works.

Thus there is order when rulers and ministers take different paths, and disorder when they take the same path. When they each find what is right for them and manage the necessary responsibilities, then those above and those below have a way to benefit from each others' services.

So the boughs cannot be larger than the trunk, the branches cannot be stronger than the root. This means that there is a way in which the light and the heavy, the large and the small, regulate one another.

As for those who attain authoritative power, what they hold is very small, but its presence is very great; what they keep is very limited, but what they control is very vast. A huge tree can support a massive house because it has the strength to do so; a small lock can control opening and closing because it is in an essential place.

If imperative directives are promulgated in such a way that those who conform to them gain benefit and those who oppose them are unlucky, then everyone will listen and obey. The issuing of directives and enforcement of prohibitions are empowered by the masses. The just cannot benefit everyone in the land; but when they benefit one person, everyone follows them. The violent cannot harm everyone in the land; but when they harm one person, everyone rebels against them.

This is why it is imperative to carefully examine the questions of what to do and what not to do, what to abandon and what to leave in place.

164

Lao-tzu said:

Contracting an inch to extend a foot, compromising in small matters to achieve rectitude in great matters—sages will do this to direct people. When rulers evaluate ministers, if they do not consider their major achievements and just summarize their general activities to look for minor goodness, this is the way to lose the wise.

Therefore when people are rich in virtue, one does not ask about the details of their conduct, and when people are highly praiseworthy, one does not criticize their minor affairs. Such is the human condition that there is no one who does not have some shortcoming: if they do the essentials rightly, then even if they make minor mistakes this does not constitute a burden; if they do the essentials wrongly, then even if it is common practice it is not worthy of much consideration.

Therefore those who are punctilious in small matters do not achieve anything worthwhile, and those who carp about conduct do not accept the masses. When the body is large, its joints are distant; when the scale is enormous, praise is far away. This is the way to evaluate ministers.

165

Lao-tzu said:

Never in history has there been anyone who could make his conduct perfect. Therefore superior people do not press for completeness in one individual. They are straight without being divisive, honest without being cutting, direct without being extreme, masterful without being critical.

In matters of the Way and virtue, wise kings of old did not forcibly demand everything of everyone. They cultivated themselves by means of the Way and did not press others; thus they were easily appreciated. If you cultivate yourself by means of the Way, then you will have no troubles.

Even the crown jewels of the Hsia dynasty could not be perfectly flawless, and even a pearl like the bright moon cannot be perfectly clear; and yet everyone in the world treasures them, because they do not let a little defect get in the way of great beauty. Now if you focus on people's shortcomings and forget about their strengths, and want to find good people in the world in this manner, it will be hard.

When ordinary people see someone whose position and social status are low and whose work is ignominious, they cannot tell if he has great

strategy. Therefore the way to evaluate people is this: if they are of high status, observe what they promote; if they are wealthy, observe what they give; if they are impoverished, observe what they accept; if they are of lowly status, observe what they do. See what difficulties they regard as troublesome, in order to know how brave they are. Move them with joy and happiness, to observe their discipline. Entrust them with money and goods, to observe their benevolence. Shake them with fear, to observe their control. In this way you can find out people's real conditions.

166

Lao-tzu said:

To contract is a means of seeking expansion, to bend is a way of seeking straightness. To contract an inch to expand a foot, or bend the small to straighten the great, are things that superior people will do.

If a hundred rivers flow parallel and do not pour into the ocean, this is not a valley; if courses of action go in different directions and do not take to good, this is not leadership.

Good words are valued insofar as they can be put into practice; good deeds are valued insofar as they are humane and just. The faults of superior people are like solar and lunar eclipses, which do not destroy the light.

Therefore the wise do not act arbitrarily, the brave do not kill arbitrarily. Choose what is right and do it, assess what is proper and carry it out; then your affairs will be accomplished and your achievement will be sufficient to rely upon, your name will be praiseworthy even after you have died.

Even if you have knowledge and ability, it is necessary to make humanity and justice the basis, upon which knowledge and ability can then be established and practiced in concert. Sages uniformly make humanity and justice their guideline: those who conform to the guideline are called superior people, those who do not conform to the guideline are called inferior people. Even if superior people are destroyed, their repute is not diminished; even if inferior people gain power, their faults are not eliminated.

Even an ignoramus would not hold a map of the world in his left hand and cut his throat with his right hand; the body is more valuable than the world. Those who go to their death in times of trouble for their leaders or relatives look upon death as like going home; justice is more important than

the body. Therefore the enormous profit to be had from the world is small in comparison to the body, and what is considered important for the body is slight in comparison to humanity and justice. This is why humanity and justice are considered guidelines

167

Lao-tzu said:

The completeness of the Way and virtue are like the sun and moon; even in foreign lands their direction cannot be changed. When inclinations and aversions are the same, then censure and praise are a matter of convention; when intentions and actions are on a par, then destitution and success are a matter of the time.

When a business meets the needs of society, then the work succeeds; when an undertaking is suited to the time, then a good reputation is established. Therefore those who become successful and famous are prudent in their relationship to society and careful in their relationship to the times. When the right time comes, it is so precise that it does not allow any respite.

Those who used arms in ancient times did not do so because they wanted territory and wealth; they did it for the survival of those who were perishing, to pacify disorder and get rid of what was harmful to the populace. When avaricious people pillaged the land, the populace was in turmoil, and no one could be secure in what they had; so sages rose up to strike down violent aggressors, pacify disorder, and get rid of the problem for the land. To bring clarity where there was confusion, to bring stability where there was danger, they had no choice but to cut off aggression.

Educate the people by means of the Way and guide them by means of virtue; if they do not listen, then rule them with authority and power. If they still do not obey, then control them by arms. One who kills innocent people is an unjust ruler, the very worst of vermin. There is no greater calamity than to collect the wealth of the land to support the desires of an individual. To give rein to the desires of an individual, thereby fostering trouble throughout the land, is unacceptable to natural ethics.

The reason for the establishment of rulership is to stop violence and disorder. Now if the ruler rides on the power of the populace to become a brigand himself, this is adding wings to a tiger; what reason is there for not

getting rid of such a man? Those who raise fish must get rid of otters, and those who raise animals must get rid of wolves; how about shepherds of the people—need they not get rid of predators? This is the reason why military operations take place.

 168

Lao-tzu said:

The Way for nations is that the rulers should make no cruel commands, the officials should have no complicated bureaucracy, the educated people should not act deceptively, the artisans should not practice decadent crafts; duties should be delegated without fuss, instruments should be complete but not adorned.

Chaotic societies are otherwise. Those concerned with activism elevate each other to high positions, those concerned with etiquette honor each other with artificialities. Vehicles are extremely decorative, instruments are extravagantly embellished. Materialists struggle for what is hard to obtain, considering that precious. Writers pursue complexity and prolixity, considering that important. Because of sophistry, matters are given long consideration without any decisions being made, thus of no help to order, instead fostering confusion. Artisans make curios, taking years to complete things that are not even useful.

Therefore the law of Shen-nung, the Agricultural Genius, said that if men who had come of age did not till the fields, the world would suffer starvation, and if women who had come of age did not weave, the world would suffer from cold. That is why he tilled the soil himself, and his wife weaved cloth herself, to set an example for the world. Their way of leading the people was not to value goods hard to obtain, and not to esteem useless things.

So if those who till the soil do not exert themselves, there is nothing to live on, and if those who weave the cloth do not work, there is nothing to clothe the body. Whether there is abundance or insufficiency is up to the individual. If there is plenty of food and clothing, dishonesty does not arise; happy and carefree, the world is at peace, so there is nothing for the intelligentsia to do with their strategies, and nothing for militarists to do with their power.

Lao-tzu said:

The course of rulers is considered and planned strategically. Action in the cause of justice is not undertaken for their own survival, but for the survival of those who are perishing. Therefore when they hear that the ruler of an enemy country is treating his own people with violent cruelty, they raise armies and mass on his borders, accusing him of injustice and excess.

When the armies reach the countryside, the commanders are given these orders. “Let there be no cutting down the trees, no digging up the graves, no destruction of crops, no burning of granaries, no taking people captive, no rustling of domestic animals.”

Then the directive is given out in these terms. “The ruler of that country is rebelling against heaven and earth, insulting the ghosts and spirits; his legal judgments are unfair, and he slaughters the innocent. He is to be punished by Nature, an enemy of the people.”

The coming of the armies is to oust the unjust and enfranchise the virtuous. If there are any who dare to oppose the Way of Heaven, brigands disturbing the people, they are to die themselves, and their clans destroyed. Those who capitulate with their families are to be entitled to their houses; those who capitulate with their villages are to be rewarded with their villages. Those who capitulate with their counties are to be enfeoffed with their counties; those who capitulate with their provinces are to be made lords of their provinces.

The conquering of the country is not to affect the populace, but to dethrone the ruler and change the government, honor the outstanding knights, confer distinction upon the wise and the good, help out the orphaned and the widowed, relieve the poor and destitute, free the imprisoned, and reward the meritorious. Then the peasants will open the doors and welcome the invading armies, preparing food for them, only fearing that they will not come.

Forces of justice stop without fighting when they reach the borders, while forces of injustice come to slaughter and bloodshed. Therefore those who fight for territory cannot fulfill leadership, and those who seek for themselves cannot attain success. Those whose undertakings are for the sake of others are helped by the masses; those who act for themselves are abandoned by the masses. Those for whom the masses act will be strong

even if they are themselves weak, while those whom the masses abandon will perish even if they themselves are mighty.

170

Lao-tzu said:

Higher justice is to govern the nation and establish domestic order, practice humanity and justice, spread benevolence and disburse charity, set up just laws and stop wrong behavior. The ministers are loyal and the peasants are united in harmony; above and below are of one mind. The ministers combine their strengths, the local lords submit to the central authority, and all in the four directions take its benevolence to heart. Cultivating rectitude at the seat of government stops enemies a thousand miles away; when directives are given out, everyone in the land responds. This is best.

When the land is broad and the population is large, the ruler is wise and the generals are good, the country is rich and the army is strong, promises are honored and directives are clear, and in confrontation with enemies the opponents flee without even fighting, this is next best.

Knowing the lay of the land, learning the advantages of the defiles, understanding the aberrations of cruel government, examining the deployment of battle arrays, when there are combat and casualties, blood flowing for a thousand miles, exposed corpses littering the fields, this is the lowest form of justice.

The victory or defeat of armies is all a matter of government. If the government masters the people, and those below are loyal to those above, then the army is strong. If the people overcome the government, and those below rebel against those above, then the army is weak.

When there is enough justice to encompass all the people, public works are sufficient to take care of all the needs of the land, official appointments are adequate to win the hearts of the wise and good, and planning is capable of determining strategies of lesser and greater importance, this is the path of higher justice.

171

Lao-tzu said:

What makes a country strong is willingness to die. What makes people willing to die is justice. What makes justice possible to carry out is power. So give people direction by means of culture, make them equal by arming them, and they may be said to be sure of victory. When power and justice are exercised together, this may be said to be certain strength. When soldiers forge ahead in the thick of battle, swords crossing and projectiles raining down, it is because rewards are certain and punishments are clear.

When the leaders look upon their subordinates as upon their own children, the subordinates work for their leaders as for their own fathers. When the leaders look upon their subordinates as upon their own younger brothers, the subordinates look upon their leaders as upon their own elder brothers. When the leaders look upon their subordinates as upon their own children, they are sure to reign over the four seas; when the subordinates work for their leaders as for their own fathers, they are sure to govern the land. When the leaders look upon their subordinates as upon their own younger brothers, they will surely die for them in difficulty; when the subordinates work for their leaders as for their own elder brothers, they will surely perish for them in difficulty. Therefore it will not do to engage in battle with an army of fathers and sons, elder and younger brothers.

So a just ruler cultivates his government internally to build up its virtue, and stops evil outside to show his power. He observes whether his people are tired or rested to know whether they are hungry or full. When there is a day set for battle, if they look upon death as like going home, it is because of the benevolence that has been bestowed upon them.

172

Lao-tzu said:

In high antiquity, real people breathed yin and yang, and all living beings looked up to their virtue, thus harmonizing peacefully. In those times, leadership was hidden, spontaneously creating pure simplicity. Pure simplicity had not yet been lost, so myriad beings were very relaxed.

Eventually society deteriorated. By the time of Fu Hsi, there was a dawning of deliberate effort; everyone was on the verge of leaving their innocent mind and consciously understanding the universe. Their virtues were complex and not unified.

Coming to the times when Shen-nung and Huang Ti governed the land and made calendars to harmonize with yin and yang, now all the people stood straight up and thinkingly bore the burden of looking and listening. Therefore they were orderly but not harmonious.

Later, in the society of the times of the Shang-Yin dynasty, people came to relish and desire things, and intelligence was seduced by externals. Essential life lost its reality.

Coming to the Chou dynasty, we have diluted purity and lost simplicity, departing from the Way to contrive artificialities, acting on dangerous qualities. The sprouts of cunning and craft have arisen; cynical scholarship is used to pretend to sagehood, false criticism is used to intimidate the masses, elaboration of poetry and prose is used to get fame and honor. Everyone wants to employ his knowledge and craft for recognition in society and loses the basis of the overall source; therefore there are those in society who lose their natural lives. This deterioration has been a gradual process, which has been going on for a long time.

So the learning of complete people is to return their essential nature to nonbeing and float their minds in spaciousness. The learning of the worldly eliminates their inherent virtues and shrinks their essential nature; while inwardly worrying about their health, they use violent actions and excess cunning to fuss about name and honor. This is something complete people do not do.

What eliminates inherent virtue is self-consciousness; what shrinks essential nature is cutting off its living creativity. If people are complete, they make certain of the meanings of death and life, and comprehend the patterns of glory and ignominy. Even if the whole world praises them, that does not give them added encouragement; and even if the whole world repudiates them, that does not inhibit them. They have attained the key of the ultimate Way.

173

Lao-tzu said:

Ancients ruled without crowns; their virtue was giving life and not killing, giving and not taking away. The world was not conquered by them; everyone alike was mindful of their virtue.

In those times, yin and yang were harmonious and equal, and myriad beings flourished. You could reach up and put your hands into the nests of wild birds, and you could tag along with wild animals.

When they had become degenerate, then birds, beasts, insects, and reptiles all became harmful to the people. That is why they cast iron and tempered blades to prevent trouble from them.

So it is that when people are pressed by difficulties, then they seek means of coping with them; it is because of their troubles that they take precautions. In each case they use their knowledge to get rid of what they consider harmful and take to what they consider advantageous.

Fixed precedents are not to be followed slavishly, tools and machinery should not remain old-fashioned. That is why the laws of kings of yore had changes. So it is said, “Terms can be named, but not as permanently fixed definitions.”

The Five Lords took different paths, yet their virtue covered the land; the Three Kings did different things, yet their fame lasted in the world. This is because they changed according to their times. It was like a master musician tuning a stringed instrument, moving the tuning bridge up or down, calculating without a fixed measurement, so that all the notes ring true.

So those who comprehend the feelings of music are able to compose melodies, those who have the basis ruling in the center and know the use of guidelines are able to govern people. Thus they abandon regulations of former kings when they are no longer appropriate, and they take to the enterprises of later ages if they are good. Therefore sages who mastered rites and music were not mastered by rites and music; they mastered things and were not mastered by things, they mastered law and were not mastered by laws. Thus it is said, “Ways can be defined, but not a permanently fixed way.”

174

Lao-tzu said:

Sage kings of ancient times derived images from heaven above, derived measurements from earth below, and derived laws from humanity in between. Harmonizing yin and yang energies to attune to the structure of the four seasons, they observed the lay of the land, its moisture, fertility,

and elevation, in order to set up enterprises that would produce goods and get rid of the problems of hunger and cold and avoid the calamities of illness and disease.

With a balanced acceptance of social behavior, they formulated rituals and music, and practiced the ways of humaneness and justice to bring order to social norms. Arraying the various natures, they established the primary relationship of parent and child to produce families. Listening to the clarity and cloudiness of sounds and the mathematics of musical scales, they set up the duties of rulers and ministers to produce nations. Observing the order of the early, middle, and late stages of the four seasons, they defined the divisions of age and youth to produce offices. Dividing the earth into territories, they defined states to govern it. Setting up major centers of learning, they taught all this. These are the outlines of government. When they attain the Way they are promoted, and when they lose the Way they are abandoned.

There has never been anything that tensed and never relaxed, or that thrived and never spoiled. Only sages can thrive without spoiling.

When sages first made music, it was to restore the spirit, stop licentiousness, and bring back the celestial mind. When it became decadent, music followed trends without reflection, licentious and passionate, without regard for the right way. These trends affected later generations, even to the point of destroying countries.

When writing was invented, it was employed to manage affairs; fools could use it so as not to forget things, and the wise could use it to record events. When it became degenerate, it made treacherous falsehoods that could free the guilty and kill the innocent.

When parks were invented, they were for mausoleums and shrines; some knights and footmen were chosen as wardens and guides. When they became degenerate, they took up the people’s time with chases and hunting, exhausting the people’s energy.

When the rulers are wise, they guide and judge fairly; wise and good people are in office, skilled and capable people are at work. Wealth is distributed downward, and all the people are aware of their blessings. When they degenerate, cliques and factions each promote their cronies, discarding public interest for private. With outsiders and insiders overthrowing each other, the positions of power are occupied by the wily and treacherous, while the good and wise remain hidden.

It is the Way of the universe to turn back when it has come to an extreme; increase leads to decrease. Therefore sages change structures to remedy deterioration; when something is done with, then they do more. They are good when they are harmonious, faulty when authoritarian.

According to the Way of sages, it is impossible to stand without cultivating courtesy, justice, and conscience. If the people have no conscience, they cannot be governed; if they do not know courtesy and justice, laws cannot correct them. It is possible to execute the unfilial, but not to make people be filial. It is possible to punish thieves, but it is not possible to make people be honest.

When sage kings are in the lead, they show people what is good and bad, and guide them with censure and praise. They favor those who are good and promote them, while demeaning and demoting those who are no good. Thus punishments are set aside and not used; courtesy and justice are practiced, and responsibilities are entrusted to the wise and virtuous.

Those whose knowledge surpasses ten thousand others are called outstanding; those who surpass a thousand others are called distinguished. Those who surpass a hundred others are called excellent; those who surpass ten others are called remarkable.

Those who understand the Way of heaven and earth, comprehend the patterns of human feelings, are magnanimous enough to accept the masses, benevolent enough to be concerned for those afar, and intelligent enough to know the use of strategy, are outstanding people.

Those whose virtue is sufficient to educate and guide, whose conduct is sufficient to depend on for justice, whose trustworthiness is sufficient to win the masses, and whose enlightenment is sufficient to be aware of those below, are distinguished people.

Those whose behavior can be taken as a model, whose knowledge is adequate to settle doubts, who are trustworthy enough to keep promises, who are honest enough to share material goods, whose ways of doing things can be taken as examples, and whose words can be taken as guides, are excellent people.

Those who keep their jobs and do not quit, who do not compromise in matters of justice, who do not try to escape when they see difficulty, and do not try to grab an advantage when they see it, are exceptional people.

When outstanding, distinguished, excellent, and exceptional people each manage their positions according to their greater and lesser abilities,

flowing from the root to the branches, regulating the light by the heavy, then those above initiate action those below harmonize, and all within the four seas are of one mind, with the same goal, turning away from greed and baseness, turning toward humaneness and justice. The influence this has on the people is like wind making the grasses bend down.

Now if you have the unworthy rule over the good, then even strict penalties cannot prevent their treachery. The small cannot regulate the great, the weak cannot employ the strong. This is the nature of the universe. So sages promote the wise to get things done, while unworthy rulers promote their own associates: observe whom they promote, and it will be clear whether there is going to be order or disorder; examine their associations, and you can tell who is wise and who is unworthy.

175

Lao-tzu said:

Those who deliberately practice etiquette polish human nature and straighten out their feelings: their eyes may be desirous of something, but they are restrained by measures; their hearts may be fond of something, but they are regulated by etiquette. Their behavior is restrained and regulated, humble and subservient; fat meat they do not eat, and clear wine they do not drink. Outwardly constraining their appearance, inwardly worrying about their virtues, they clamp down on the harmony of yin and yang, and place stress on their feelings of life itself. Therefore they are sad people all their lives.

Why? Because they prohibit what they desire without getting to the root of why they desire. They prevent what they enjoy without finding out why they enjoy. This is like penning up wild animals but not closing the fence; to try to prevent them from being ambitious is like trying to stop the torrent of a river with your hands. Therefore it is said that when you open your eyes and manage your affairs you are not saved all your life.

Etiquette inhibits feelings and stops desires; guarding oneself with duty, even if one's emotions and heart are choking and gagging, and one's body and nature are hungering and thirsting, still one forces oneself with the thought of necessity, so no one can live a full natural life.

Etiquette cannot make people not have desires, but it can repress them; music cannot make people not have fun, but it can inhibit them. Even if you

make everyone too fearful of punishment to dare steal, how can that compare with causing them not to have any desire to steal?

So we know that even the covetous will refuse that which they know to have no use, and even the unassuming will not be able to refuse that which they know to be useful.

The reason people lose their lands, die at others' hands, and become a laughingstock to the world, always turns out to be greed. If you know that a fan in winter and a leather coat in summer are of no use to you, everything will turn into dust and dirt. So if you use hot water to stop a boiling pot, it will only boil all the more; those who know the root of the matter simply take the fire away.

176

Lao-tzu said:

To act in accord with essence is called the Way; to attain that natural essence is called virtue. After essence is lost, humanity and justice are valued; after humanity and justice are defined, virtue is ignored. When pure simplicity disappears, manners and music become ornate; when right and wrong take shape, the common people are blinded. When pearls and jades are valued, the whole world competes for them.

Etiquette is a way of distinguishing the noble from the base; justice is a way of harmonizing human relationships. Etiquette of latter-day society means interacting politely, and those who practice justice give and receive; yet rulers and ministers criticize each other over these things, and relatives feud over them. So it is that when water accumulates it produces creatures that eat each other, when earth accumulates it produces cannibalistic animals, and when manners and music are adorned they produce deception and artifice.

The governments of latter-day society have not stored up the necessities of life; they have diluted the purity of the world, destroyed the simplicity of the world, and made the people confused and hungry, turning clarity into murkiness. Life is volatile, and everyone is striving madly. Uprightness and trust have fallen apart, people have lost their essential nature; law and justice are at odds, actions are contrary to what is beneficial. With the poor and the rich overthrowing each other, you cannot tell the rulers from the slaves.

If there is more than enough, people defer; if there is less than enough, they compete. When they defer, then courtesy and justice develop; when they compete, then violence and confusion arise. Thus when there are many desires, concerns are not lessened; for those who seek enrichment, competition never ceases. Therefore when a society is orderly, then ordinary people are persistently upright and cannot be seduced by profits or advantages. When a society is disorderly, then people of the ruling classes do evil but the law cannot stop them.

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Lao-tzu said:

Rulers of degenerate ages mined mountain minerals, took the metals and gems, split and polished shells, melted bronze and iron; so nothing flourished. They opened the bellies of pregnant animals, burned the meadowlands, overturned nests and broke the eggs; so phoenixes did not alight, and unicorns did not roam about. They cut down trees to make buildings, burned woodlands for fields, overfished lakes to exhaustion. They piled up earth so that they could live on hills, and dug into the ground so that they could drink from wells. They deepened rivers to make reservoirs, constructed city walls that they considered secure, penned up animals and domesticated them.

Thus yin and yang were confused: the four seasons lost their order, thunder and lightning caused destruction, hail and frost caused damage. Many beings died early, plants and trees withered in summer, the main rivers stopped flowing. Mountains, rivers, valleys, and canyons were divided and made to have boundaries; the sizes of groups of people were calculated and made to have specific numbers. Machinery and blockades were built for defense, the colors of clothing were regulated to differentiate socioeconomic classes, rewards and penalties were meted out to the good and the unworthy. Thus armaments developed and struggle arose; from this there began slaughter of the innocent.

178

Lao-tzu said:

When society is about to lose its essential life, it is like the arising of negative energy: the leadership is ignorant, the Way is neglected, virtue dies

out. Projects are undertaken that are out of harmony with Nature, commands are given that are in violation of the four seasons. Summer and autumn decrease their harmony, heaven and earth are drained of their virtue. Rulers on their thrones are uneasy, grandees hide and do not speak, ministers promote the ideas of those above even to the detriment of normalcy. People estrange their relatives yet take in villains, use flattery for secret schemes, they vie to support spoiled rulers, going along with their chaos in order to achieve their own ends.

Therefore rulers and subjects are at odds and not on friendly terms, relatives are estranged and do not stick together. In the fields there are no standing sprouts, in the streets there are no strollers. Gold lodes are quarried out, gemstones are all taken, tortoises are captured for their shells and have their bellies removed. Divination is practiced every day; the whole world is disunited. Local rulers establish laws that are each different and cultivate customs that are mutually antagonistic.

They pull out the root and abandon the basis, elaborating penal codes to make them harsh and exacting, fighting with weapons, cutting down common people, slaughtering the majority of them. They raise armies and make trouble, attacking cities and killing at random, overthrowing the high and endangering the secure. They make large assault vehicles and redoubled bunkers to repel combat troops, and have their battalions go on deadly missions. Against a formidable enemy, of a hundred that go, one returns; those who happen to make a big name for themselves may get to have some of the annexed territory, but it costs a hundred thousand slain in combat, plus countless numbers of old people and children who die of hunger and cold.

After this, the world can never be at peace in its essential life and enjoy its customary ways. So conscientious people and sages rise up and support it with the virtue of the Way, and help it with humanity and justice. Those nearby promote their wisdom, while those at a distance take their virtue to heart. The world is merged into one, and descendants help each other over the generations to get rid of the beginnings of treachery, stop illogical persuasion, eliminate cruel laws, get rid of troublesome and harsh duties, put a stop to the effects of rumor and gossip, shut the gates of factionalism, erase intelligence quotients to conform to general normalcy, ignore the body and dismiss the intellect to greatly commune with the undifferentiated unknown, as everything returns to its root.

Even sages cannot create a time; what they do is avoid losing the time when it comes. That is why they do not die out.

 179

Lao-tzu said:

There is a river that is ten fathoms deep, but it is not dirty, so metal and stones can be seen in it. It is not that it is not deep and clear, but no fish, turtles, or water snakes will take to it. Grain does not grow on rock; deer do not roam on barren mountains, for lack of cover.

So in the practice of government, if harshness is taken for punctiliousness, or pressure is taken for perspicacity, or cruelty to subordinates is taken for loyalty, or coming up with many schemes is taken for meritorious achievement, such things are ways of causing massive ruin and tremendously rending divisions.

“When the government is noninvasive, the people are pure; when the government is invasive, the people are lacking.”

 180

Lao-tzu said:

Govern countries by regular policies, use arms with surprise tactics. Make unsuperable government policy first before seeking to prevail over opponents. If you use the unruly to attack others’ disorder, this is like responding to a fire with fire, or to a flood with water; in the same way it will not be possible thereby to establish order.

So something different is used for surprise tactics. Calm is a surprise for the frantic, order is a surprise for the confused, sufficiency is a surprise for the hungry, rest is a surprise for the weary. If you can respond to them correctly, like supercession of a series of elements, you can go anywhere successfully.

So when their virtues are equal, the larger party triumphs over the smaller. When their power is comparable, the wiser party vanquishes the more foolish. When their intelligence is the same, then the party with strategy captures the party without strategy.

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